

Animals & Men

The Journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology

A BRITISH THYLACINE ?

ALSO:

Big cats in KENT
COYPU in THE ATTIC



Issue 19.

£2.00

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Magazine cartoonist and artwork: Mark North
Newsagent from nowhere: Richard Muirhead
Maxine Pearson: "blondes have more fun."
Paranormal research: Gill Bennett
Associate founding editor: Jan Williams
Tour Manager: Nigel Wright
Hedge-Witch: Joyce Howarth

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Cryptozoology: Dr Karl Shuker, Dr Lars
Thomas, Loren Coleman
Zoology: Clinton Keeling, Chris Moiser
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"In her abnormalities, nature reveals her secrets"
(Goethe)

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ANIMALS & MEN

**CFZ, 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter,
Devon, EX4 2NA, England**

<http://www.eclipse.co.uk/cfz>

**SUBSCRIPTIONS & PAYMENTS:
PLEASE SEE PAGE 47**

**This issue is dedicated, with love, to the
memory of Leigh - the best neighbour
the CFZ ever had - who lost her battle
with cancer on the 20th April 1999.**

**We ask for your good wishes, and prayers
to whichever god you
believe in, for her and her bereaved
husband Roly**

THE GREAT DAYS OF ZOOLOGY ARE NOT DONE...

Dear Friends,

As I sit here typing this editorial it seems only too amazing that it is five years to the month since I started this magazine, and in the words of Robert Hunter, "What a Long, Strange Trip it's been!"

Looking back at the last five years, and glancing over to the list of people involved in creating this present issue of *Animals & Men*, it is good to note, not only how far we have come in the last five years but how many of the people who were with me at the beginning in the first few issues are still around now.

It's also sad to remember those stalwarts of the A&M editorial posse who are no longer with us. I would particularly like to thank Jan Williams, who, although she is not presently an active contributor is still a valued friend and colleague. If it hadn't been for you, my dear, this whole thing would never have started in the first place! Really!

I'd also like to take a few moments to remember our two departed cartoonists, Jane Bradley and Mort, both of whom who are now dead and both of whom are still sadly missed.

In recent years, much of the day to day running of the CFZ has devolved upon the broad shoulders of Graham Inglis and Richard Freeman (who for reasons best known to himself has depicted me as Godzilla this issue) who have both brought their own inimitable styles to the Centre for Fortean Zoology, and without whom I think that I can safely say that the CFZ would no longer be in existence.

I owe them both a personal debt of gratitude for helping me through my divorce and the period of illness which followed. Thanx should also go to Chris Moiser, Tom Anderson, Mark North, Darren Naish and Clinton Keeling who all in their own ways not only helped me through some of the worst times in my life but also helped define the magazine that you are now reading. Thanx Guys.

OK, enough of the maudlin stuff already! We've completed five years, what are we gonna do in the next five? The answer can only be that we shall continue to strive to get bigger and better and do our best to find out (in our own little ways) whether (at the risk of sounding like something from a well known TV show), the truth is indeed out there. Five years down the line we ain't doing too bad, and things can only get better.

Slainte

Jonathan Downes (Editor)





NEWSFILE

Compiled by
Jonathan Downes

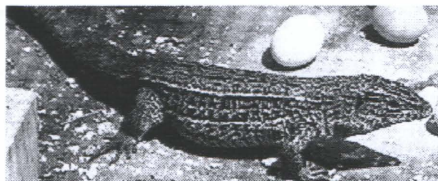


NEW AND REDISCOVERED

NEW LIZARD SPECIES

According to our old pal Chad Arment, an American herpetoculturist suggests he may have acquired an undescribed species of tegu. Those jolly nice people

at the Copyright Liberation Front managed to get hold of a picture, but we have no other details. Richard Freeman, a seasoned herpetologist confirms that with the markings similar to those of a European wall lizard, this is not a species he has seen before.



REDISCOVERY OF THE CARIBBEAN MONK SEAL?

According to the Marine Mammals Conservation list on the Internet MARMAM@UVVM.UVIC.CA which quoted Boyd, I. L., and M. P. Stanfield. 1998. Circumstantial evidence for the presence of monk seals in the West Indies. Oryx 32:310-316.

Based on interviews with 93 fishermen in northern Haiti and Jamaica during 1997 an assessment was made of the likelihood that monk seals survive in this region of the West Indies. Fishermen were asked to select marine species known to them from randomly arranged pictures: 22.6 per cent (n=21) selected monk seals. This number was significantly ($P < 0.001$) greater than the number who selected control species (walrus, harbour seal, and sea-lion) that they were unlikely to have observed.

However, it was not significantly different (n=19, $P > 0.1$) from the number who selected manatees, which are known to occur in the region in small numbers. More than 95 per cent of respondents also identified species that are known to occur commonly in the region. Further questioning of the 21 respondents who selected monk seals suggested that 16 (78 per cent) of them had seen at least one in the past 1-2 years. Those fishermen that were able to provide further descriptions gave information about size and colour that was consistent with many of these seals being

monk seals. It is possible that the Caribbean monk seal is not extinct.

Last seen in 1952, the Caribbean Monk Seal is usually considered to be extinct.

However, it should possibly be pointed out that according to many authorities if it weren't for their geographical separation, Caribbean Monk Seals and the endangered Hawaiian Monk Seals would be charted as the same species.

PAINTED POOCHES?

We were recently e-mailed these pictures of some rather jolly looking puppies to us...



The pictures were accompanied by the following text:

...a young man was visiting China. These puppies were being sold by a street vendor for twenty dollars apiece. The vendor spoke little or no English and therefore could not explain where these dogs came from or what they were. To date, their breed identity is a mystery. ".....

Our thoughts are that these dogs are almost certainly ones that have been dyed to make them more saleable, but we are intrigued enough by the mystery to throw it open to you, the reader. Answers and ideas please.....



FRESHWATER FUN

Regular *Animals & Men* readers will know that I have a sneaking fondness for freshwater crabs, and so I was particularly pleased when the *Sydney Morning Herald* of December 15, 1998 announced the discovery of a new species from Australia.

They report:

"Freshwater crabs are one of the most mysterious and little known of bush creatures. Since the 1970s scientists have thought there were only two species of freshwater crab in Australia, and that these - which had lost the ability to survive in salt water - had evolved when the country was part of the super-continent Gondwana. But crustacea expert at the Australian Museum, Mr Shane Ahyong, has discovered new species of freshwater crab in Sydney pet shops which are making their way into the aquarium trade years before they are being described by science. He has traced back one, apparently a new species, to a particular stream in Cape York. It does not yet have a common name but is similar in appearance to another recently described freshwater species known as the wine glass, deaths head or jolly roger crab because of the black skull and crossbones-like mark on the top of its carapace (shell). It seems Australia has at least seven species of freshwater crabs, ranging from the pygmy crab whose carapace is less than 2.5 centimetres wide to possible freshwater wine glass crabs reportedly with shells 10 centimetres across. Aquarists are attracted to the crabs because they are easy to breed and keep, Mr

Ahyong said. The freshwater crabs have made a number of adaptations to amphibious life including giving birth to fully formed miniatures of themselves and being able to move their internal organs from side to side in order to force oxygen through their gills."

REDISCOVERY OF THE JAVAN TIGER

The Javan Tiger (*Panthera Tigris Sondaicus*) was last seen alive in 1972 and is generally considered to be extinct. In January 1999, however, an Indonesian magazine called *Tempo* made some extraordinary claims. "At the very least, there are five individuals," the article quotes Wayhu Giri P. as saying. Wayhu is identified in the piece as a member of a team of naturalists who found suspicious footprints, claw marks, and scat in the 58,000-hectare Meru Betiri national park on the island of Java. The article also quotes Indra Arinal, identified as the Head of Meru Betiri National Park, as reinforcing Wayhus assertion by proclaiming, "Sightings by locals prove that the Javan Tiger is indeed still around."



Perhaps so, but other claims of lurking Javan tigers have been made as recently as 1997. Rumors then circulating through the international media alleged that forest fires raging in Indonesia at the time were flushing surviving members of the subspecies from their smoldering habitats. In all cases, however, those reports were found to be inaccurate; the cats observed were leopards, not tigers.

"Reports like this article in TEMPO are sensational," says Cory Meacham, author of the book *How the tiger lost it's stripes*, which details the endangerment of the animal. "They would shake the world of conservation if they were true. For a split second, we all want to

believe that we have another chance to save the Javan tiger. But the odds are very, very long. Incontestable proof has yet to be supplied by any credible source. I'm afraid that in all likelihood these will once again be found to be some other type of forest cat, not tigers."

0

The Meru Betiri team, however, is evidently convinced otherwise. The article in TEMPO explains that the scat they found, according to researchers they asked to examine it, contains hair, splinters of bone, and claws from prey, which are found, the researchers assert, in the scat of tigers but not of other cats.

Johannes Subijanto, identified in the article as the Head of Sub-Directorate for the Conservation of Flora and Fauna in the Department of Forestry, hopes to settle the matter once and for all. "There must be a DNA test done on the spoor which was found," the piece quotes him as saying, noting that a sample of the scat has been sent to the United States for further analysis (no mention of where, specifically).

For more information, consult the TEMPO magazine website at www.tempo.co.id. The complete text of the original article, which appeared on page 38 of the January 12-18 1999 issue, can be found there.

RHINO RESUSCITATION



The Sumatran, a.k.a. hairy, rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is probably the most endangered of all rhinoceros species. Numbers have declined by 50% due to poaching over the last 10 years, leaving fewer than 400 Sumatran rhino surviving in very small and

highly fragmented populations in Southeast Asia with Indonesia and Malaysia being the only significant range states.

It was very important news, therefore when *Associated Press* reported on March 8th 1999 that:

"Villagers on India's border with Myanmar have reported sighting the rare two-horned Sumatran rhinoceros, a species once believed extinct in the Indian subcontinent.

Recent sightings in the far eastern Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland suggest the hairy Sumatran rhinoceros are surviving on the subcontinent, said Anwarudding Choudhury, chief executive of the Rhino Foundation. "Going by reports received from tribal villagers in Manipur and Nagaland, there could be at least 10 to 15 Sumatran rhinos in India," Choudhury said.

The Sumatran rhinos once roamed the wet savannah grasslands from the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in Bhutan and northeastern India to Indonesia. But with poachers killing the animal for its horn, believed to have certain aphrodisiac properties, the species reportedly became extinct in the early 1920s."

THE NAME GAME

The Texas Audubon Society plans to sell the rights to name a new species of bird that was recently discovered to the highest bidder next month. The group will use the money for bird conservation efforts in Texas and Brazil.

Bret Whitney, a bird expert and co-owner of an Austin-based nature tour company, discovered the new type of bird during a recent expedition in the Amazon region of western Brazil. According to tradition, Whitney has the right to name the species. Instead, he donated that right to the Texas Audubon Society, which is auctioning the right on March 5 at its 100th anniversary celebration in Fort Worth.

Organisers don't believe any species name has ever been bought or given away. "I'd say that as long as

the person who discovered the thing is agreeable, there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with it." said Dr. Eugene Hargrove, director of the Center for Environmental Philosophy at the University of North Texas in Denton. That is, he added, *"unless it produced a really stupid name."*

I think that the folks at The Centre for Forean Zoology would probably use this historic occasion as a chance to vent their stupid senses of humour to the full, but as we haven't got any money to spare for frivolities like that, we shall never know....

BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A PARADIGM?

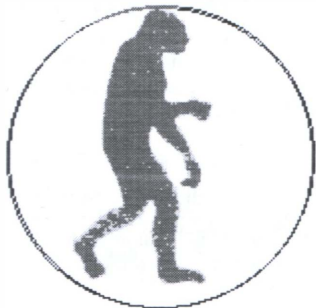
Animals & Men subscriber C. G. M. Paxton, a marine biologist at the Oxford university, has just published in the *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom*, what Michel Raynal has described as "a remarkable contribution to "mathematical cryptozoology".

By plotting on a graph the descriptions of large marine animals (more than 2 m long) from 1830 to 1995, Paxton obtains a curve almost hyperbolic which has not yet reached its asymptote (the limit value corresponding to the knowledge of all the large marine animals). Through extrapolation, Paxton can calculate the number of large animals remaining to be discovered in the oceans :

"This suggested a total of approximately 47 species awaiting description [...] with an instantaneous rate of description in 1998 of 0.189 per annum [...], suggesting one new large open water species is discovered approximately every 5.3 years."

Paxton is now studying the possibility to extend his method to large freshwater animals.

BHM

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO
FOUKE ME BABY

On Tuesday, December 1, 1998 the *Arkansas County Gazette* published an article in which it claimed that "The Fouke monster, a legendary bigfoot look-alike, still stalks the lowlands of Miller County, according to local residents." It claimed over forty sightings in the preceding year including "22 sightings in one day. ...There's even one guy who swears there's a family [of monsters] who live behind his house."

The most recent sighting was on July 17 "when four people purportedly saw the creature walking along a dry creek bed about 5 miles south of town." The newspaper article admitted however that since the creature was first reported in the 1940s no-one has actually managed to capture a specimen on film and that "For a time, the only evidence of the creature was a plaster cast of a 13½-inch footprint taken from a local soybean field." In true fortune zoological traditions "The cast was destroyed in a service station fire in the late 1970s".

YEREN WIN PRIZES (ALL WE
NEED NOW IS DALE WINTON)

According to the *Xinhua News Agency* on December 1st 1998, authorities in Shennongjia in central China's Hubei Province, has announced that any tourist or adventurer who catches a yeren or Chinese wild man

will be eligible for a prize of 500,000 yuan (60,240 U.S. dollars).

The tourism department in Shennongjia is issuing a special card at home and abroad which reveals the secrets of "Big Foot" in a bid to promote local tourism. It said that anyone who purchases this card will be provided with a tent, camping equipment, food and other daily necessities.

The sponsor announced that anyone snaring a live "Big Foot" will be awarded 500,000 yuan; if a dead body is found, the discoverer will be rewarded with 50,000 yuan. Those who take photos or videos of "Big Foot," or collect its fur or excrement will also win prizes ranging from 10,000 to 30,000 yuan, the sponsors said.

LAKE AND SEA
MONSTERS

A six foot three inch sturgeon which weighed 105 pounds was washed up on the shores of Lake Harriet near Minneapolis in October 1998. Although this is by no means the largest fish of this species ever discovered it is interesting to note that there have been reports of 'sharks' and even lake monsters from the lake for many years

and that this fish was probably the cause. Some ichthyologists have estimated that this fish could have been seventy or eighty years old. Had the fish been caught by an angler, it would have been a state record. Minnesota's record lake sturgeon, caught in 1994 in the Kettle River in Pine County, was 70 inches long, with a 26½ inch girth. It weighed 94 pounds. *Animals & Men* salutes the local entrepreneur who immediately rushed out the following postcard....



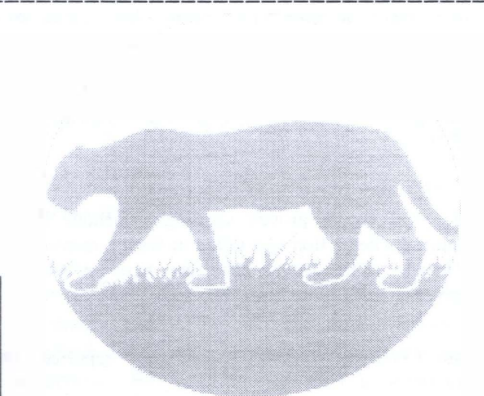
Meanwhile a sturgeon measuring over seven feet long was caught last summer in Lake Erie (home of more 'monster' sightings over the years) and a "record breaking" sturgeon of unspecified measurements was caught in Iranian waters. Just how big do these fish get? Does anyone know the real records for the biggest sturgeon ever? There are several species and it is usually said that the beluga sturgeon (which produces the finest caviar) is the biggest but we have been unable to get hold of properly verifiable records.

If anyone in the A&M readership happens to know please tell us and we shall print it in the next issue.

MYSTERY CATS

United States

Although the Eastern Cougar is still officially extinct there is a burgeoning amount of evidence to suggest



that it does indeed still exist. *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* [Illinois] reported on December 30, 1998 that although Pumas have not been recorded in Missouri since 1927, researchers at both ends of the country are "studying hair and muscle samples from a mountain lion pelt found by a deer hunter [on] Nov 13 beside a road in Texas County in south-central Missouri. The pelt still had the feet and head attached, as if it had been skinned for mounting."

Mountain lions once roamed throughout Missouri but were largely wiped out by shooting by the 1860s. The last documented report of a wild mountain lion in the state was an animal killed in 1927 in the Bootheel. In recent years, two mountain lions were videotaped in Missouri, one in Reynolds County in the Ozarks and another near the Springfield area.

Meanwhile in Rhode Island the *Providence Journal* reported in December 1998 that:

"He says he got a very clear look at the tawny-coated cat, larger than his 80-pound German shepherd and with a tail as long as his arm-span, rummaging through trash barrels in his front yard on Dec. 16. As he raced toward it, he said, it leaped across his entire front yard in just two bounds.

I called DEM. [Department of Environmental Management] and right away they're telling me it's a bobcat. But I know what bobcats look like, and this was no bobcat," said Supinski. Michael Morrissey, an officer with DEM agreed. After looking at the eight-

-inch tracks, he wrote in his report that they seemed to originate from "a large cat, larger than a bobcat." And the large cat that best fits Supinski's description - since a typical bobcat or lynx weighs less than 30 pounds -- is the Eastern mountain lion, according to a DEM book on Rhode Island mammals."

The most recent proven sighting in Rhode Island occurred when a lion was killed in West Greenwich in 1847 or 1848. Its remains are kept at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology.

The *Chicago (Illinois) Sun-Times* reported on November 24, 1998 that

"Authorities are suspending their search for a mysterious catlike animal that has been spotted in Will County. The hunt will resume if the elusive feline is spotted again, said animal control officer Brian Vanek. "Right now that animal - if there is an animal - could be anywhere," he said.

The search Monday focused on an area near Monee between Interstate 57 and Illinois Route 50. Animal control officers, local police, volunteers and a State Police helicopter, using infrared equipment, have had no luck finding the animal after three days of searching underbrush and wooded areas.

A dark brown animal was seen Friday near Parkview Elementary School in Steger. Later, there was another sighting in Crete. A search near Steger turned up some mysterious paw prints, but nothing that conclusively proves a lynx, bobcat or other large animal is roaming the countryside of Will County.

However, in CONCORD, N.H. on January 11, 1999 (<http://www.nandotimes.com>) - reported that a video taken on Christmas Eve 1998 suggests that the Eastern Cougar is alive and well. "There are people out there who believe that wolves would come back on their own and mountain lions would come back on their own," said Rosemary Conroy of the Society for the Preservation of New Hampshire Forests. As for herself, Conroy said she believes cougar sightings are more likely a rural myth but added that "as long as there are large blocks of land out there, it's possible."

The most recent sighting came on Christmas Eve morning. Maureen Clark, a photographer and bear trainer in Lincoln, said she and a nephew saw the small, rusty coloured, long-tailed animal clearly in her backyard. However, by the time she grabbed her camera, the animal had wandered away.

"It's not like it was a monster, but it wasn't a house cat," she said. Fish and Game biologists have studied the 6-second tape but reached no conclusion because the view of the animal is largely blocked by trees and leaves. Spokesman Eric Aldrich said some believe the animal could be a mountain lion, but Gustafson and biologist Mark Ellingwood are more skeptical. Gustafson and Ellingwood pointed to what seems to be a striped tail and pointed ears on the cat in the video.

They said mountain lions normally are solid coloured with rounded ears. Gustafson speculated that it could be a large feral cat or the much more common bobcat with an unusually long tail.

Ellingwood said biologists would love to confirm sightings, but they must rely on hard evidence such as tracks, scat, hair or photos.

"It's like chasing ghosts," he said.

A more tangible encounter took place in Pittsborough when, according to the *North Carolina Headlines* on Thursday 19 November "A volunteer at the Carnivore Preservation Trust who was attacked by a 130-pound cougar has been reunited with the animal. Mark Kostich suffered bites and puncture wounds on his neck, shoulder and legs Sunday... and nerve damage has left one arm partially numb. Yesterday, the 37-year-old Kostich paid a visit to Cooper the cougar... but he didn't get too close. Kostich says he will still volunteer at the sanctuary for endangered animals, but he won't go in any cages again. Meanwhile, board members and employees plan to review safety procedures this weekend.

The News and Observer says the attack on Kostich was the second this year involving a Preservation Trust animal worker."

The misidentified moggy which turns out to be the TRUE (whatever that means) identity of a mysterious

ABC is a common motif within fortaean zoology, but it is unusual to find a Transatlantic version of the story.

On the 5th January 1999 *Associated Press* in Oregon reported that:

"Police rushed to the scene when a caller said a cougar had been spotted in a field near Oak Elementary School, and the two officers took up a position on the perimeter. Peering through binoculars from a distance of six to seven city blocks, they spotted the ferocious feline - a domestic house cat, probably a calico. Cougars don't usually have orange faces with white chests, the officers noted.

They cleared the incident with their dispatcher at 10:15 a.m. Monday with one notation: Sure, it was just a calico, but it was a really big one."

Orleans residents who happened across the small creatures on the following day. Fred Drought was driving to work when he thought he saw a dog run across the road. Then he realized he was looking at a monkey. *"It looked kind of lost,"* Drought said. *"Like it didn't know which way to go."* The Tulane center has more than 4,500 monkeys. It uses the animals to study cancer, malaria, leprosy, and other diseases. In a scenario reminiscent of one of the crappier science fiction movies Richard Freeman likes to torment us with at the CFZ the Centre Manager, Astor Bridges reassured the public with an announcement that *"The escaped monkeys were used only for breeding and had not been infected with diseases"*

Yeah right!

OUT OF PLACE



MONKEY BUSINESS

On October 20th 1998, *The Associated Press* reported that workers in Covington, were setting fruit traps and searching through woods for the last of two dozen rhesus monkeys that had escaped from a Louisiana primate research centre, which is supposedly the world's largest. The monkeys broke out of their cage at the Tulane University Primate Centre startling suburban New

SEWER SNAKES

As the controversy regarding alligators in the sewers rumbles on (see *Clinton's Cogitations* this issue) it is heartening to note that at least one species of reptile has been salvaged from the sewers of the Land of the Free. *Associated Press* (who seem to have a monopoly on these sorts of stories - at least they seem to post more of them than *Reuters* - announced on the 20th October 1998 that a seven foot python was found in North Bergen, New Jersey, just across the river from New York City. Police say it wasn't bothering anyone. In fact, one officer said the snake was just "sunning itself." Nevertheless, they tossed it in a garbage can and held it for the Humane Society. A teenager who noticed the commotion admitted to being the owner. He says he tossed the snake down a sewer a few hours before because it was too expensive to feed. Experts say it costs between five and ten dollars a week to keep a python full.

STREWTH!!!!!!

On December 21, 1998 *Associated Press* (again!!!) reported that Kevin Fisher of Tanworth in the West Midlands swore he hadn't been drinking when he told police he spotted a wallaby under a lamppost in his home town.

"Mr. Fisher couldn't believe his eyes and sounded quite shaken. He swore blind he was still sober." an unidentified police spokesman told reporters.. *"Luckily, we took him seriously,"* the spokesman said. *"Though at first we were tempted to tell him to hop it."* And we haven't heard THAT joke before!!! The wallaby was apparently called 'Willy' and had escaped from a nearby zoo.

WIL-E-COYOTE

The St Louis Post Dispatch on Tuesday, December 8, reported that residents of Chicago's south suburbs say hungry coyotes are roaming their neighborhoods and attacking pet dogs and cats. One resident, Linda May said that she had watched in horror two weeks before as her 5-month-old cockatoo, Cheli, was snatched off his tether by a large animal that loped out of the darkness. *"It was strong enough to break the chain,"* said May, who lives in Lemont Township.

"I think it was a coyote." She isn't the only one in the area who believes at least one coyote is making the rounds looking for something to eat. In the last two years, Jill Nicholson said, four of her family's animals have disappeared.

"Two cats and a big duck that we used to take care of in a pond on our property (vanished)," said Nicholson. *"Then in the middle of September, our dog disappeared."* Nicholson suspects the dog was killed by a coyote she's seen around the neighborhood on and off for years. In recent years, coyotes have been spotted throughout the south and southwest suburbs, from Harvey to Joliet to Evergreen Park.

CAYMAN GEDDIT.....

At last *Reuters* have come up with a story, even though their taxonomy is a little awry. On the 4th March 1999 they announced that a 7-foot, 175-pound (79 kg) alligator that was pushed out of its natural feeding grounds by development in Rio de Janeiro resorted to dining on local pets.

The story continued in this vein, describing how "the ravenous reptile" had invaded a home near a swampy nature park and gulped down the owner's dog along with four chickens that were in the yard.

Apparently it took four officers from Rio's environment patrol squad 30 minutes to subdue the alligator.

They were able to wrestle the reptile onto a stretcher and ship it unharmed to a zoo. At the risk of being labelled as annoying pedants, can we point out that there aren't any alligators in Brazil. Either it is a true cryptozoological oddity or (as is more likely) it was a Caiman....

MEET THE BEETLES



The Associated Press ushered in Samhain by announcing that a species of black and orange ladybug (probably one of the *Coccinella* spp but we can't be sure) is reaching plague proportions across Missouri.. Exterminators had been flooded with calls over the past week as the unusual Asian beetles squirm their way into homes across the state for the winter.

But Mike Brown, state entomologist for the Missouri Department of Agriculture, urged home owners not to overreact.

The lady beetles won't injure people, pets or plants, they don't carry disease, and they can't structurally damage a home. Besides, he said, gardeners and farmers will come to appreciate their presence in the spring.

One lady bug can consume 50 to 60 aphids a day while munching on a variety of other insects including scales, mealy bugs, mites, leaf hoppers and various types of soft-bodied insects - the kind that infest trees, bushes, herbs and small grains. Missouri agricultural experts, from gardeners to golf course superintendents, started importing the beetles about five years ago for the purpose of fighting aphids, Brown said. "Probably the one negative aspect of this beetle is its behavior in trying to find shelter," he said.

The typical ladybug burrows into the ground for the winter, but the orange and black Asian ladybeetles are natives of Japan and China and live a very different lifestyle. About two weeks before Halloween, the beetles leave the woods and fields in search of a place to hibernate for the winter.

FEARFUL SYMMETRY

On January 27, 1999 *The Associated Press* in Jackson, New Jersey reported a 600- to 800-pound tiger that was on the loose in a densely wooded area was shot and killed by authorities. Police and state Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife officials had tried to tranquillise the animal with drug-filled darts but when that didn't work, they shot the tiger. The irony was that they were unable to determine who owned the unfortunate beastie.

The Police said that officials at Six Flags Great Adventure & Safari Park, a nearby tourist attraction, "believe they have all theirs." It wasn't a good time for big cats because only six weeks before on 7 December 1998

The Electronic Telegraph reported that a cheetah had mauled to death a three-year-old boy after it escaped from its enclosure in a zoo near the city of Saumur, in the Loire Valley, police said.

The accident occurred on Saturday when two five-year-old female cheetahs that had dug a trench under the fence surrounding their enclosure at Doue-la-Fontaine broke loose and headed for a group of visitors. One animal attacked the boy and mauled his father, who had tried to beat it off. He was taken to hospital with cuts. The zoo was closed pending an inquiry.



Meanwhile about a month previously in India on the 28th *The Associated Press* (Gad bless 'em). reported that a leopard sauntered into a house and lolled on a bed for four hours, watching television and napping, before being packed off to the zoo, newspapers reported Thursday. Bim Devi bolted the bedroom door and ran out screaming to call the police, in Panchkula, a town about 250 kilometers (155 miles) northwest of New Delhi, after her four-year-old son saw the leopard stroll into the driveway and break open the bedroom door, *The Asian Age* reported. No-one was hurt.

Officials said the animal had either escaped from the local zoo or strayed from a dense forest near the town, and entered the house to escape morning traffic. "It watched all the morning (television) programs," Devi was quoted as saying by *The Hindustan Times*. "It tampered a little with the children's books and school bags but did little other damage to the house."

Tired by then, it took a nap sprawled on the bed.

The Centre for Fortean Zoology will confirm that daytime TV has that affect on *people*, so why not on leopards?

BIRD BRAINS

The Shetland News (<http://www.shetland-news.co.uk>) reported on the 18th February 1999 that as heavy snow showers batter Shetland, many islanders will feel jealous to see a Mediterranean cattle egret bird leave the snow-covered far North for the much kinder climate in southern Portugal. After having been in the care of local SSPCA officer Ron Patterson for the last three weeks, this lucky bird is getting a free lift from British Airways back to where it is supposed to be, the Albufloa Marsh near Faro in Southern Portugal.

The heron-type bird was found exhausted and near starvation at the end of January when it made an emergency landing on one of Shetland's inter-island ferries, at least 2,000 miles from its natural habitat. Since then Mr Patterson has looked after the bird at the SSPCA Wildlife Centre, Tingwall. Mr Patterson said yesterday (WED) the cattle egret had recovered well, but it was time for the bird to get back to the wild.

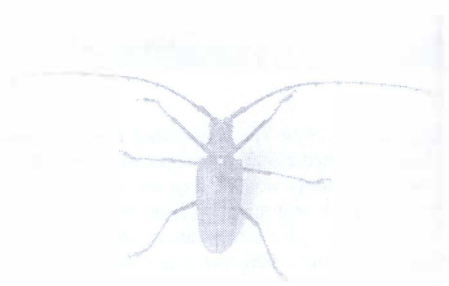
However, this was not the only exotic visitor to our shores this winter. On the Isle of Man according to the *Manx Independent* of Friday 19 March 1999 a spectacular frigate bird, the first ever to survive after reaching the British Isles, will soon be flown to its native sea to be released back into the wild. Only a handful of people know where the bird has been recovering since it was found on a Castletown beach in February. The bird was exhausted and injured when found, but was soon in the capable hands of experts. It was feared the adult female, with a wingspan of eight feet, would attract thousands of birdwatchers eager to see the unique sight.

Elizabeth Charter of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry said the *fregata magnificens* could have come from the Azores or Central America. Manx squid has proved popular with the bird, which has regained lost weight and strength and should soon

be ready for a return to its native clime. When it is ready, Mrs Charter said the bird would be flown by willing airlines and conservationists to the Florida Keys, where it will be released into the hands of more experts. The only other frigate bird to have landed in the British Isles was found in the Scottish Isles but died, she added.

And on the other side of the Atlantic the *La Crosse Journal Sentinel* of November 7, 1998 reported that Lars, a green, violet-ear hummingbird, native to Central America, had died at a rescue centre in central Wisconsin. "What he was doing in Edwin and Marcella Larson's backyard in this Mississippi River town, thousands of miles from his home, is anybody's guess. Blown badly off course by a hurricane? His internal compass completely out of kilter? What is certain is this: The little guy was adored. "He really touched a lot of people." Marge Gibson, a noted wildlife rehabilitator from Antigo who nursed the bird, said Friday, "How so much energy could have been packed into one teeny little guy really captured people's interest. People took the little sprite to heart."

CLINTON HAS LONG HORN?



On the 3rd February *Associated Press* announced that the man who has already said that smoking dope is OK if you don't inhale, and that oral sex ain't adultery (and that starting a war in the Balkans might save his political arse) had declared war on "Troublesome alien species such as the Chinese mitten crab and the voracious Asian long-horned beetle" which are costing Americans tens of billions of dollars and threatening entire ecosystems. I thought you didn't approve of ethnic cleansing, Bill?

TO BE SURE

There seem to be several interesting visitors to Irish waters in recent months. According to *Science Today* on Monday 11th January 1999 large numbers of jellyfish (*pelagia noctiluca*) have been stranded over a three-month period along the west coast. This is an exceptional event, according to Marine Institute scientists, and it is the first time they have been recorded in such numbers in Irish waters. They were first detected in Donegal in August and spread to other parts along the western coast during the following months. This species, noted for its physical beauty, has amber brown to red-brown patches and sometimes flecks of pink with trailing mouth parts and tentacles. It can grow to about 12 cm in bell diameter. Dr Dan Minchin of the institute's fisheries research centre in Abbotstown, Co Dublin, would like sightings of the species to be reported to him (email: dminchin@frc.ie).

A fortnight later *The Irish Times* reported that Lough Swilly in Donegal is experiencing a starfish population explosion but it could tackle the problem with a technique developed in Clarinbridge, Co Galway. This is one of the main findings of a study carried out by Galway student, Niamh McKeown, which took a Marine Institute award in the recent Young Scientists' Exhibition. Ms McKeown (13), who is a second-year student at Salerno Secondary School in Galway, recorded 2,040 starfish per hectare in Lough Swilly, where there are significant shellfish beds. This compares to only 30 or fewer starfish per hectare in Clarinbridge, near the lucrative oyster beds.

Starfish can have a devastating impact on shellfish. One of the techniques used against them involves adding lime to the water. However, the use of "hairy ropes" in Clarinbridge is far more successful and more environmentally friendly, she says. The ropes are hung from a boat and used as a dredger to snag the starfish, she explains. "It only needs to be done once or twice to clear the area." Disappointingly, she found that the starfish have no economic value. "I thought they might have a medicinal use but unfortunately not," she said. Niamh McKeown took a joint first place in the junior category for biological and ecological sciences at the exhibition and was also given a prize by Dr John Joyce of the Marine Institute for the best individual project with a marine theme.

IT'S ONLY METAL; WHAT A BOAR.....

The Independent on 23 October 1998 reported that "Wild boars of Kent cause havoc in the hop gardens" with a dramatic piece of journalism which began....

"A CHILL wind whistled through the trees, whipping up the autumn leaves carpeting the forest floor. In the dense undergrowth, rustling noises could be heard. Was that a faint grunting in the distance? Here, deep in woodland on the Kent and East Sussex border, lurks a colony of wild boars that has become the scourge of farmers. The boars are blamed for ravaging fields and wrecking crops in search of food. Some say that they even snatch lambs by moonlight...."

A local farmer was quoted as saying that if she had her way they would all be machine gunned (what a nice lady) *because "they've rooted up our hop garden; it looked like the Somme,"* she says. *"And they've taken lambs in the night. All you find in the morning are little hooves."*

Beckley Garage is regularly called upon to repair vehicles damaged by boars that can weigh up to 300lb. *"If a car is in collision with a boar, the car comes off worse,"* says Mrs Farrant. Down the road, John Taylor, of Little Farm, is dejected. *"They rooted up a six-acre maize field,"* he says. *"There's no point replanting it because they'll just come and dig it up again."*

The National Farmers' Union wants the ministry to order a cull of the boars, which were hunted to extinction in this country in the 17th century. The current population originates in the 40 or so commercial farms that rear them for their succulent meat. Many scampered to freedom when the 1987 hurricane flattened fences.

The Times got in on the act on January 26 1999 when it announced that "Wild boars 'should be eradicated'". The Game Conservancy Trust, which advises the Government on countryside issues, said there would be a growing risk of people being injured or killed if boars were left to breed unchecked. The trust also gave warning the animals could damage crops, kill lambs and ground-nesting birds, and pass on diseases to

free-range pigs. Up to 300 wild boars are at large in Kent, East Sussex and Dorset after escaping from commercial farms. Each female can produce two litters of up to nine piglets each year.

The trust's recommendations came in response to a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food consultation document published last year. Dr Stephen Tapper, who wrote the trust's Wild Boar Consultation Report, said yesterday: *"It would be irresponsible to do nothing . . . These populations will increase and could get out of hand."* He said that trained marksmen should be hired to eradicate the animals, and that tighter controls should be imposed on farms.

Keith Taylor, of the Wild Boar Association, supported the trust's call for eradication.

A spokesman for the ministry said that the trust's report echoed the recommendations made by the Central Science Laboratory, and that eradication was one option that ministers were studying.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE.....

On March 21, 1999 the *Seattle Times* reported that B-45F, an independent, elk-eating gray wolf on the verge of adulthood, has journeyed alone from Idaho to seek a home in the meadows and the snow-capped mountains of northeastern Oregon. But as she does her "wolfy thing," as one fan puts it, B-45 (the F is for female) has triggered a range of intense reactions: naming contests and an ad campaign from wildlife enthusiasts captivated by her solo odyssey; angry phone calls and threatening e-mails from cattle ranchers who want her removed or shot. In a debate that had been raging for a month, the wolf is cast as both hero and villain:

She is a pioneer who may lure male wolves into the state, establishing a resident pack there, or she is a menace to livestock and tourism, the region's economic mainstays. Wildlife authorities consider B-45 an environmental success story, proof that attempts to restore endangered species to their native territory is working....

THE CASE OF THE BRITISH THYLACINE

by Richard Freeman



In the spring of 1810, a bizarre series of livestock killings began. Over the next six months, a mystery predator cut a bloody swathe through Cumberland. This creature was never identified, but became known as the Girt Dog of Ennerdale. Though often quoted, this chapter in British animal mysteries is one of the most cryptic and obscure. Un re-reading the tales recently, I found a strange thread that no-one (to my knowledge) has picked up on before. The saga of the Girt Dog may be even odder than anyone has ever realised; and the 'Dog' itself may be a doubly Fortean beast.

The tale began when the corpse of a half-eaten ewe was discovered on the fells above Ennerdale Water. The victim was soon followed by others.

as the culprit killed every night. Farmers and shepherds patrolled the hills, but the creature remained unseen.

Such was the quantity and ferocity of the attacks; that natural predators, like foxes were discounted. As local farmers became worried; posses of men and dogs scoured the area, but the beast evaded them. It never attacked the same flock on consecutive nights.

Its uncanny elusiveness caused superstitious ramblings among the villagers. More fuel was added to this growing fire; when the beast began to show some disturbing eating habits. Many carcasses were left mostly uneaten, but the blood had been drained from their wounds, as a vampire would do.

Finally, someone caught a glimpse of the creature. A shepherd watching his flock at dawn saw the killer, but its description brought even more confusion. It was like a tawny-coloured dog, with dark, tiger stripes, quite unlike anything he had ever seen before.



Ennerdale today - still one of the most remote parts of the Lake District

the Dalesfolk argued over the identity of this strange beast; as to whether it was a wolf, or a lion, or a tiger? Some even believed it to be a

supernatural entity, touting its love of blood as 'proof'. Around this time the name 'Girt Dog' was coined. Another queer attribute of the 'Girt Dog' was its effect on normal dogs. Fell sheepdogs would cower in its proximity, and refuse to follow its spoor. More proof of its diabolical nature, whispered the locals. Hunting dogs were brought in to replace *the* sheepdogs and a pack was collected to hunt down the killer. After days of hunting, the pack finally tracked down the 'Girt Dog' and forced it to break cover. It tried to run, but the hounds soon caught up with it. the 'Girt Dog' turned on its pursuers with unbelievable savagery, killing several hounds swiftly. The rest of the pack scattered in terror and the monster escaped. Obviously no normal dog could have caused such a bloody rout.

The farmers changed tactics and littered the hillsides with poisoned sheep cadavers. The 'Girt Dog', however, disdained carrion, preferring to rend and slay amidst the living flocks. As the bodycount rose, rewards were offered for anyone who could end this reign of terror. Once a group of armed men had the beast encircled. The creature charged at one of the men, who lost his nerve and threw himself aside. Unfortunately, an elderly man, Jack Wilson, who was also quite deaf, was collecting firewood close by. The 'Girt Dog' ran straight through his legs and bowled him over. Jack swore that it was more like a girt lion than a girt dog.

Professional huntsmen were called in, but had no more luck. The 'Girt Dog' led many on a wild goose chase. Up to 100 mounted men with packs of dogs failed to catch it. Finally, on September 13th 1810, the 'Girt Dog' was surrounded and shot. Incredibly it escaped, despite its wound and ran towards the River Enen. Here it was found cooling its injury and ran once more to Eskat Wood, where it made its last stand. Flushed from cover, mortally wounded, the huntsmen's dogs closed in and tore it to shreds.



What little was left at the bizarre predator was sent to Keswick Museum, and mounted as a specimen. Sadly, Keswick Museum closed in 1876 and no record was kept of what happened to the exhibits. So ends this weird tale. What are we to make of it? Well, we have some intriguing clues.

The 'Girt Dog' displayed some characteristics which were very unlike any dog. All the witnesses described it as being striped. There are no striped dogs: but this animal must have sufficiently resembled a dog to have been given the name 'Girt Dog'. The animal drank its victim's blood, while often leaving the flesh untouched. All canids eat the meat at their prey. It terrified ordinary dogs, and easily killed hunting dogs, even when outnumbered.

Only one animal could account for these descriptions -- the Thylacine, the striped coat and blood-drinking behaviour at the marsupial wall is well-known. Tasmanian hunter described how it could bite through a dog's skull with ease and Sir Richard Owen described it as "the most fell beast of prey". This hypothesis may seem fantastic at first, but let us examine some facts.

The thylacine did not suffer from serious persecution until the 1860s. In 1810, it was still a common animal, in Tasmania, where many were kept in captivity, there were no laws governing zoos at the time and although there

were only a few sedentary zoos in Britain in the 1800's: there were many travelling zoos. These appalling institutions consisted of caged animals being carted around Britain by horse-drawn carriage. This must have been a terrible ordeal for both the exhibits and the horses.

Perhaps the best known of these was the infamous Wombwell's travelling Menagerie. As well as the stock-in-trade such as bears, lions, tigers and monkeys: Wombwell's also exhibited rarer animals, such as snow leopards. It is even thought that they possessed a gorilla, without even knowing it!. Apparently mis-labelled as a chimp, it would have been the first gorilla in Britain, (gorillas were as unknown as yetis until the 1840's). Zoological accuracy was not a high priority in these establishments. I refer readers to Clinton Keeling's article *"The British Nandi Bear"* in issue six of *"Animals and Men"*. Therefore, it is not out of the question that a travelling zoo had thylacines in its collection, and that one of them had escaped in the Lake District in 1810. Remember there was no television or radio then and many people were illiterate, especially in the countryside. Most people know nothing of natural history beyond their own country, hence the confusion the 'Girt Dog' caused.

Enquiries at the new Keswick Museum drew a blank, as did those at other Lake District Museums, Libraries and Historic Societies. No records of the whereabouts of the stuffed specimens were kept. One hopes that the museum's stock was sold on, rather than just thrown away.

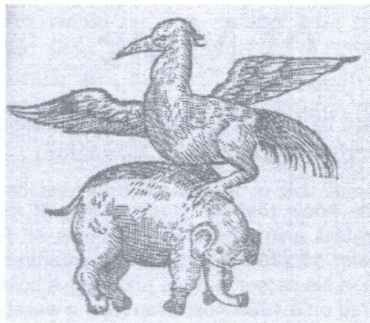
Very little of the 'Girt Dog' would remain now: but it isn't beyond all hope that somewhere, in some dusty basement or attic, is a skull labelled 'wolf' or 'dog', which has too many incisors and opens far too wide to be either species.

BESTIARY: THE RUKH

by Ade Dimmick

In this issue I would like to look at the Rukh or Roc. Another fabulous creature that, although a creature of considerable mythological pedigree, may have actually existed in a less-exaggerated form.

The Rukh was a giant bird-like creature which featured prominently in Arabian myth and legend.



Its roots however, can be traced back to much earlier Persian sources. In fact the words Rukh and Roc are said to be related to the Persian names for the Bird of Immortality. The Rukh was a 'Storm Bird' - the movement of its wings created the winds and its flight path created lightening. (Many Rukh-like creatures have assumed this role in the mythology of the world, as well as representing the Bird of Immortality.)

Sinbad the Sailor had a number of encounters with the Rukh on his voyages. On one particular occasion he was actually carried off and deposited on a rocky eyrie atop a Rukh egg. Sinbad measured the eggs circumference as fifty paces - described by one source as resembling

the white dome of a mosque. As one can imagine, a bird that lays such an egg must itself be of gigantic proportions. So large in fact, it was said to be able to carry off elephants and block out the light of the sun! Its feathers were also said to be the size of a palm frond. Some sources state that it resembles a giant eagle or a griffin in appearance. Others refer to it as having two horns on its head and four humps. Legend maintains that the Rukh only ever lands on Mount Qaf, the *axis mundi* or centre of the Earth. However, some stories do refer to it landing occasionally in isolated places.

In the 13th century Marco Polo wrote of the Rukh, which he believed originated on the island of Madagascar, he also believed that the Rukh was a type of griffin. Many centuries earlier the historian Herodotus (c.BC480) referred to stories told by Egyptian priests, of giant birds which would carry off both people and animals. These 'birds' originating from a 'land east of the mainland'. (Possibly Madagascar?)

The reference to Madagascar is important as it may lend a degree of authenticity to the Rukh legend. Giant birds have existed in the not-too-distant past on the island of Madagascar. Related to the ostrich, *Aepyornis Maximus*, stood at ten feet and weighed in at 990lbs, a formidable bird by any standards! It also laid king-size eggs, not quite Rukh-like dimensions, but never-the-less measured 15 inches in length and 3 foot round. Interestingly enough, the *Aepyornis* itself was considered to be a mythological creature by western zoologists until bones and eggs (containing half-developed chicks) were discovered, and there is apparently evidence to support their existence up until the mid 1800's.

Is it possible that the giant birds of Madagascar were actually the legendary Rukh, having become assimilated with earlier mythology and bold seafarers tales - ultimately exaggerated to mega-proportions by story-tellers down the centuries?

COYPU IN A YORKSHIRE ATTIC.

by Andrew Scott

During the early eighties (1981) my family moved into a converted barn in a village called Horsehouse in Coverdale. The barn was being rebuilt after a fire and a new roof had to be built.



The barn was in a field away from the river cover and the environment was fairly damp. Anyway when the barn was completed we moved in. Over the next few weeks however there were strange scratching noises emanating from the attic at night, although we put it down to being mice or rats, we eventually had to investigate it as the noises were becoming louder.

My dad climbed into the attic and shone his torch around. As he shone his torch into the attic, two big eyes reflected back in the darkness. When my dad came down he was very pale and he exclaimed that there was something in the corner with great big eyes.

The next day we contacted the local environmental pest control who came over to investigate.

After going into the attic he announced that we had a Coypu up there. Well fortunately he had the appropriate equipment to catch it, which he managed to do and put it in a cage, where upon he whisked it off in his van. I can only guess it sought shelter in our attic whilst the roof was being built, during the winter.

Sweet Wallaby of Mine

(Written by Chuck Leonard for, and taken verbatim from, *Mojo Magazine*)

Few people know that Axl Rose is one of rock 'n' roll's greatest animal lovers. The Guns N' Roses lead squealer adopted several cuddly creatures over the course of his career, but the pride of his collection was acquired on a 1988 Australian tour: a wallaby.

An implausibly cute, floppy-eared bundle of fun, it became Axl's favourite pet. Axl settled on the name Ozzie, a hilarious pun on the creature's Antipodean origins, and sly dig at The Sabs' lead singer.

Axl spent many happy hours frolicking with his friendly marsupial, taking it with him as Guns N' Roses criss-crossed the globe. Ozzie even had his own luxury flight case, complete with hidden airholes, which eased his passage through customs.

If questioned, Axl's plan was simply to assure officials that the animal must have made its own way into an unattended equipment case, and become trapped.

Sadly, Ozzie's convincing disguise as a package of electrical equipment led to tragedy. It was during a string of tour dates in Alaska that one roadie left what

he thought was a surplus case in the band's U-Haul while Axl and friends soundchecked. When Axl emerged, demanding the whereabouts of his furry friend, the band's road manager rolled out Ozzie's flightcase. Exposed to sub-zero temperatures in the van, Ozzie was frozen solid.

Guns N' Roses mythology has it that another faithful roadie attempted to assuage Axl's grief by taking the unfortunate marsupial home and preserving it in his chest freezer, in the hope that cryogenic advances would allow Ozzie to be resuscitated.

There are no reports as to whether leading veterinarians are nearing a remedy for Axl's deep-frozen friend.

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SIPANDJEE - AN UNIDENTIFIED APE

by Allan Edward Munro

In 1993, in Gabon, Steve Holmes was working at an isolated oil facility. One day, a few kilometres inland and 200 kilometres south of Port Gentil, he was driving to lunch at around noon when he glimpsed for a few seconds an ape that ran into the road 10 metres away, and which caused him to break sharply before running with arms raised high through long grass and into the forest.

The 1.5 metres tall Primate was running bipedally and was built like a man except for the fact that the arms were longer and that much of the animal had reddish brown hair the same colour as the laterite rock used locally for road construction. The local name for this reportedly aggressive animal is sipandjee, but other cryptozoological primates are known throughout Africa under different names, and probably incorporating more than one species. The waterbobbjejan (South Africa) type, therefore, is probably what would be described as a robust australopithecine, whilst the agogwe (East Africa) is presumably a species of gracile australopithecine. The sipandjee may be congeneric with the agogwe.

This is based on information given to me by Steve Holmes, and for further reading on the subject, I recommend Fortean Times issue 111 (June 1998). The cryptozoological Primates of Africa are often overlooked, as discussion usually centres on areas like the Himalayas or the Cascades, and material on the subject is hard to come by, compared to Bigfoot etc....

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CLINTON'S COGITATIONS

by Clinton Keeling

Greetings, gentlefolk, and herewith the above - based on "A&M", issue 18.

I've for long had a high regard for the Scots, and still retain two legacies of having spent part of my schooldays in their country - a) a preference for porridge made with salt rather than sugar, and b) the ability to spell correctly. Consequently I was rather surprised to read (p.4) that there are plans to re-introduce the Beaver to Scotland, as I'd have credited the Scots with more sense than to allow this. Before we go any further it might not be out of place here to mention that I spent over three years with the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Have you ever seen a Beaver dam, and lodge? It resembles a cross between a flood (which, of course, it is) and a battlefield - furthermore on which the said battle has been lost. Not only that, but the water in the dam is always opaque and muddy - while I've known of at least two occasions (where it was necessary for the dam to be reduced) when the only means of destroying the lodge was with dynamite, literally. I think it isn't unreasonable to ask ourselves whether we really want this sort of imposition on our overpopulated little country with its ever-diminishing unspoiled areas? Admittedly the European Beaver isn't as bad in this direction, but there's really no room now for an introduction of its size.

Incidentally, someone is talking baloney when they assert the Beaver became extinct here a mere four hundred years ago. Eight or even nine hundred years since would be nearer the mark.

Why, oh why, will those who set themselves up as pundits not make sure of their facts?

EDITOR'S INTERJECTION: As the 'pundit' in question, I feel that I must step forward here to defend my honour. Herewith a quotation from J E Harting's *British Animals extinct within historic times* (1880):

"After stating that the Teivi was the only river in Wales, or even in England, that had Beavers, Giraldus remarks: *"In Scotland they are said to be found in one river, but are very scarce-"* Hector Boece (or Boethius), that shrewd old father of Scottish historians, writing in 1526, enumerates the *Fibri* or Beavers, with perfect confidence, amongst the *ferae naturae* of Loch Ness, whose fur was in request for exportation towards the end of the fifteenth century, and he even speaks of *"an incomparable number,"* though perhaps he may be only availing himself of a privilege which moderns have taken the liberty of granting to medieval authors when dealing with curious facts. Bellenden, in his vernacular translation of Boethius' *"Croniklis of Scotland,"* which he undertook at royal request in 1536, while omitting stags, roe-deer, and even otters, in his anxiety for accuracy, mentions *"Bevers"* without the slightest hesitation; and, though exception may be taken to the first clause of the sentence, yet the passage is worth quoting:

"Mony wyld Hors and amang yame are mony Martrikis [pine martens], Bevers, Quhitredis [weasels], and Toddiss [foxes], the furrings and skynnis of thayme are coft [bought] with

Far more likely, I'd say, is the fact that the big ivory-carriers have been harried and shot for so long there are comparatively few of them left, with the result the small-tusked or the tuskless are now more in evidence, if not the majority, and their genes are being carried on.

So, on the same page, "Bugs can read your mind". What sheer, utter, bloody rubbish; what puerile, insulting tripe. Where did it originate? Oh, I see - California...

I don't know whether I'm becoming crotchety in my old age, or whether I'm just finding it harder to grasp things, but after reading "Gubu Norge" (pp17-21) I felt obliged to read it again, as I had the uneasy feeling I might have missed something in it, but seemingly I hadn't. I know what I have to say may offend some people, but I honestly believe it ought to be said, as it involves a trend definitely on the increase in journalism and it isn't a good thing. In a way I congratulate the author, as it's taken him a solid five pages in which to next to nothing. Should you consider this a harsh judgement, I seriously suggest you read it again, objectively. I could have written it in perhaps a page and a half.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here, again, I must come to the defence of Daev Walsh (who wrote the article in question) and indeed me for approving it. The GUST expedition to Norway in search of a legendary lake monster had achieved so much media coverage, and there was so much misreporting about what really happened that we decided to cover the expedition in depth. Jan Ove Sundburg had made (and continues to make) so many extraordinary claims about his findings (and other subjects) that he deserves the scrutiny given to his expedition by Daev and us.....

You know, although I haven't the pleasure of knowing the gentleman, I've come to have quite a high regard (and by my standards that's ecstatic

praise) for Tom Anderson, who has always struck me as writing sound sense. He seems to have had a couple of lapses in his letter "Gulo and Gullible" (pp 38-3)).

First, I must make it clear I wholeheartedly agree with the basis of his point -that the belief that this large, diurnal, noisy species, with its characteristic gait and destructive habits is not only living but also breeding in this country should be relegated to the realm of Cloud Cuckoo Land, as the only zoological collections to have kept the species this century are the Zoological Society of London and Norfolk Wildlife Park - neither of which had any escapes or disappearances. This then, leaves us with the private sector, as it might be called, but only a very few Wolverines have ever graced private collections here for the simple reason the species has always been very difficult to obtain. Where I disagree with Tom Anderson is in his very common and completely misguided assumption, to judge by what he wrote that every non-domestic animal in private hands must automatically be no more than just a "pet". He should just try telling, for example, Raymond Sawyer who has just achieved breeding Giant Tortoises in his splendid collection at Cobham, or Christopher Marler who, at Olney, has the country's only Gayal (*Bos frontalis*) and breeds the Bald Eagle annually, or Martin Bourne who has the country's only privately-owned Tapirs and has bred Chevrotains at Middleton, near Manchester, that they are "pet-keepers." On second thoughts, as I wish Tom Anderson no harm, I wouldn't advise it..

EDITOR'S NOTE: Having re-read Tom's letter. I would like to add my ha'porth. Firstly, neither Tom nor anyone else at *Animals & Men* would wish to denigrate any of the fine work being done by people keeping exotic animals in what Clin calls 'The Private Sector'. The CFZ have a small collection of exotics as, I know, does Clin himself.

However this does not detract from the undoubted fact that in my opinion at least, the vast majority of people who keep exotic animals do so for the wrong reasons and have insufficient knowledge of the species they have taken on. I've been guilty of that in the past, (and when necessary I have always shouted for help to Clin!!) Pet shops are notorious for selling people animals with insufficient or completely erroneous instructions as to how to look after them. Our files are full of horror stories which suggest that prior to the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976 all sorts of people were being sold all sorts of animals that they were completely unsuited to keep. These included several species of felid, and even bears. However I have to agree with Clin, Chris and Tom that the evidence for anyone ever having kept Wolverines as pets in this country is scanty in the extreme.....

The other point? Well, Mr Anderson apparently disapproves of "Victorian colonial Jingoism" - and it must be admitted he might have a point.

I mean, not only did we inflict on many other countries, particularly in Africa, so many horrors during our occupation, but when we departed, instead of immobilising them or taking them with us, we just left them.

Things such as railways, roads, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals and clinics, successful agricultural systems, democratic government, airports, daily papers, law and order, home industries..

Small wonder the French and Portuguese, being more humane than us, fought like fury to hang on to their colonies and their subdued peoples. Kind you, there's still hope - many parts of Africa are showing their yearning for the good old days by going back to incessant inter-tribal warfare and genocide and torture and not coping

with famine - keep it up lads and lasses, this way you'll soon be back to your old average lifespan of thirty years. Sic transit gloria mundi...

Ayrshire Tales

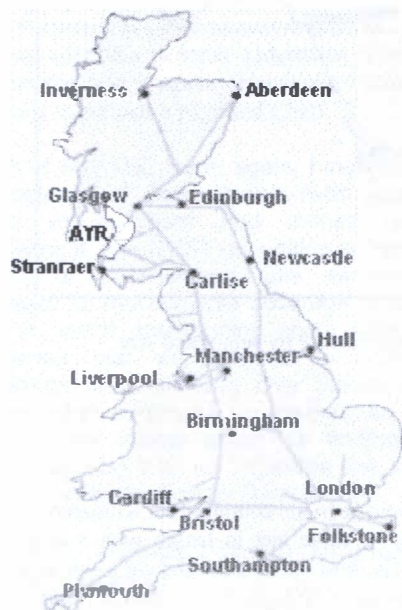
By Mark Fraser: Editor of
Haunted Scotland

While chatting to an acquaintance, Mr. Jack Dunlop, who has worked on the land day and night for practically all of his forty years or so, around the area of Maybole in Ayrshire, I asked if he had ever seen or come across any signs of 'Big Cats.' Alas he had not, but he never dismissed the idea as he knew others who had found remains of lizard-like creatures, the largest being around two feet in length, one he found partially skinned. Jack firmly believes that these lizard-like animals now live in the countryside, maybe once they were pets, he muses, but they must now have established themselves in the countryside.

Another odd tale he told me was concerning 'chicken mutilations.' He returned one morning to his yard to find fifteen dead chickens were heaped in a neat pile together at the end of the row of bodies. Somewhat shocked and rather distraught at losing so many fowl, Jack eventually packed them away in a black bin liner and dumped them for the time being unceremoniously in the corner of the yard. Again on returning from the fields later in the day he was somewhat dumbfounded to find that the black bin liner had been ripped open and the chickens along with the heads displayed in exactly the same manner as he first found them, were lined in a row.

Now Jack being a no-nonsense down to earth sort of chap did not think of aliens but went for his shotgun and positioned himself by his back scullery window which overlooked the scene of the crime. After about a quarter of an hour a weasel or ferret (I cannot now remember which it was he said.) came running across the yard toward its trophies from its hiding place in the grass. 'Bang' the animal was shot dead, which is a shame because I personally would liked to have known what it would have done next with the dead chickens.

I mention this because I have come across a couple of old stories recently of alleged 'animal mutilations' involving farmyard animals being lined up in this manner, maybe this is a possible explanation. But I stress it does not take away the fact that animals which have been operated on, rather than mutilated. (Which I feel is a misleading description but one I will continue to use anyway) have been found across the globe in mysterious circumstances.



Incidentally as an interesting aside while talking to Gary Campbell of the Official Loch Ness Fan Club, he told me of a game-keeper friend in Sutherland who had witnessed an otter attack and kill a lamb. It stripped its skin bare and proceeded to feed on its carcass!

William O'Neil spotted a large animal early Wednesday morning (9th of August.) around 3 am. It crossed the road and was carrying what he thought was a rabbit in its mouth. It was dark in colour and around the same size of a rottweiler dog. He switched on his main beams and was sure it was not a fox or a dog. He was driving back from Inverness and the sighting occurred on the Blair Atoll - Pitlochry Road.

October 3rd, 1997. Mrs. White was doing her house work when she noticed an animal that somehow seemed out of the ordinary to her - it reminded her of a puma. She took a couple of looks and then decided to film the animal which was sat at rest, not moving at all. After a minute of filming she continued with the house work, when she returned the animal had gone. She never saw it arrive or leave. The animal moved only once during filming and that was to look directly at Mrs. Whites bungalow. She describes it as being black with a large head and a kind of square maybe snub kind of face. The animal was sat against wire fencing, it is not known if it was behind or in front of it. The height of the fencing from the ground is:

Ground to top fence post = 4 inches.

Ground to top wire = 37 inches.

The ground behind the fence is consistent with the above measurements. The ground in front of the fencing is not level and in some places is 49 inches to the top fence post and 37 inches to the top wire. Depending on whether we can find out if the



animal was behind or in front of the fence we may be able to estimate its height and size.

A copy of the video is in my possession.

A Strange Bird. May 1995, Ayrshire.

The creature was seen on the A76 approaching the roundabout at Irvine coming from Kilmarnock. David Berryman saw a large bird which he estimated to be three feet in length with a large wingspan. It followed parallel to the male driver of a car. The bird remained at the car's side and seemed to glide effortlessly as the car reached speeds in excess of 70 mph. It was dark in colour



and had a strange "square shaped mouth or beak. It also seemed to have tufts of fur instead of feathers."

The witness was alone and as he turned into Irvine and headed towards Harbourside the bird carried on straight ahead, although it must have followed the car, or seemed to have for over a mile. The bird obviously made a great impression on David Berryman in order for it to stick in his mind and ring me.

Pike & Sheep.

David Currie, is in his late 40's, and after spending fifteen years in the Australian outback he thought he knew all about animals and their strange behaviour. That was until he and his wife took a stroll in the grounds of Kildrum Castle, an old Campbell stronghold. They had to walk across a field to reach the castle and as they passed a small river they both saw a huge pike laying motionless just below the surface of the water. Its huge eyes stared at the couple, "seemingly taking everything about them in," Mr Currie mused later. Then, with an inexplic-

able seizure of fear, the couple suddenly became rooted to the spot for a few moments. They then quickly walked up-stream with the pike following them until they moved away from the waters' edge.

Almost at once the couple were surrounded by sheep and they stood in the middle of them.

The sheep closed in, prodding and nudging the now terrified couple who "began to believe that nature had turned against them". After several minutes of jostling the sheep then made a pathway for Mr and Mrs Currie who were now completely shaken. They headed for their car, abandoning all ideas of visiting the castle.

Incidentally Kildrum has a notorious past connected with black magic and witchcraft. Today, negative vibrations and energies are said to be still present, especially in the ground and trees.

Curiosity Killed The Cat

By

Neil Arnold

In the 1930's a hunt ensued. A pursuit like no other. And yet an action taken, that faded into obscurity from the day it proceeded.

In 1963, Shooters Hill near East London, was to be the site where the search for the Surrey Puma began. Meanwhile, in the '80s on the West Country quagmire known as Exmoor, the Royal Marines were tracking The Beast. Another mystery felid. However, some sixty years previous the first big cat hunt took place. An event forgotten like any normal day. A moment of great significance, yet never to reach the cryptozoological heights that the Exmoor and Surrey hunts had touched. For in the '30s there was no media attraction and certainly no big cat flap. Or was there?

During the latter part of the '90s Kent has become a hot-spot for big cat sightings. Although a number of large felines roam the Weald, the main cat sightings have caused local newspapers to give birth to the legend of the Beast Of Blue Bell Hill.

It is not clear as to what species of large cat is stalking the rural valley, but there is enough evidence to suggest that a number of predators stalk by day and night. This enigma has received a great deal of coverage, this causing argumentative theorising between myself and the few other people who have an interest in the

phenomena. However, debate is now over for over the past few months and weeks I have gained information that finally sheds light onto the moggy mystery. I have discovered the root, the one seed from which the puzzle stems.

Leonard Cuckow has seen big cats in Kent on three occasions. His most recent sighting occurred whilst he was strolling with his wife Marjorie, near their home in Strood. The couple are both in their eighties and have many tales to tell.

I met up with the charming couple after I contacted them in regards to a 1998 Easter sighting. They were walking down a disused lane to view local roadworks. This particular lane is flanked on the left by an orchard, and on the right a football-pitch sized bramble site.

It was late morning and as they walked Leonard knelt down to tie his shoe laces. As Marjorie continued she noticed, on the left bank, a large sandy-coloured cat. Alarmed by the couples presence it sprang, from a sitting position, some fifteen-feet clearing the lane, and landing on the opposite bank before scurrying away into the undergrowth. Leonard caught a fleeting glimpse of the creature as it leapt so close to his wife. It was around four-feet in length, muscular and cheetah-like in its appearance.

Leonard marked the area, rang the local newspaper but asked for anonymity. Unfortunately the newspaper gave full details, but this proved to be a blessing for me. I contacted Mr. and Mrs. Cuckow who proved to be very warm. I gained hordes of information during a three-hour chat and Leonard told me things the newspapers knew nothing about.

I never once doubted the couple's experience and after tales of angling, farming and nature I explored the area where the big cat was spotted.

Stonehorse Lane is about fifty metres long, running off a main road. It is brought to an abrupt end ~ major roadworks as a bypass is currently being built. However, the wild 'field' on the right, although being low in its cover and lacking in actual woodland, is an undisturbed patch. In a way it is an odd area and quite out-of-place against the hum of the busy High Street and noisy estates. And yet it is perfect habitat for a big cat.

I roamed the thickets during the warm May day. With my still camera at the ready I threw small stones into nearby brambles, hoping to alarm any large feline, although I must admit that in the lonesome silence I was incredibly unsettled.

A fox would raise its curious head but no feline would show its face. However, I believe that this particular area may well be a stop-off for the cat. There is much prey for the predator, and although building work progresses only fifty-feet away, the foliage is a distant world. In fact, many years ago a convicted murderer settled in the Stonehorse Lane thickets whilst he was on the run. For three weeks he eluded capture, and only when he emerged from the brambles was he caught

Leonard saw another big cat whilst fishing in the '80s. He was with friends at Snodland Lakes when they spotted a large cat that was drinking from the lake. Leonard is adamant to this day that the creature was no dog. He knew by the way it 'went down' that it was a huge feline.

In the '30s Leonard was in his 'teens'. His father owned a pub at Halling, an old fashioned pub built up high and from its windows the kids would stare across the landscape of the Downs. During his childhood there he'd heard many tales of ramblers spotting puma-type cats and other out-of-place cats. And then, one day in Wouldham Leonard had his first, and most significant big cat sighting. In fact it is Kent's most significant big cat event.

Leonard was playing shove ha'penny (a game involving a slate board with chalked horizontal lines, participants would 'shove a half-penny' with the heel of their hand in order to nudge the coin over the lines. Certain lines would represent points) with a few friends. A number of others were viewing the rolling fields where a steam-engine would often pull a plough to furrow the land.

About a dozen boys, including Leonard were alerted by one fellow that something black and strange was prowling about 'up there'. The creature they all watched mooched about before strolling into undergrowth. The creature was then seen again over the next few days by different people.

Drastic action was taken as apparently big cat sightings were quite frequent in them days, according to Leonard. And so, the Royal Engineers were called in. Some sixty men who combed the Downs, banging pieces of metal as their rifles hung over their shoulders. Soon after the commotion began, the black feline was sighted. Eventually it was shot in the Downs at Burham, where some sixty to seventy years later, big cats are still seen.

According to Leonard, everybody knew where the cat had come from and it was certainly not the only cat. And so the police approached the local zoo, Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake Zoo, owned by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake. A man of some importance within the community, but a man who admitted that the dead feline was indeed his. It had been a 'black leopard'.

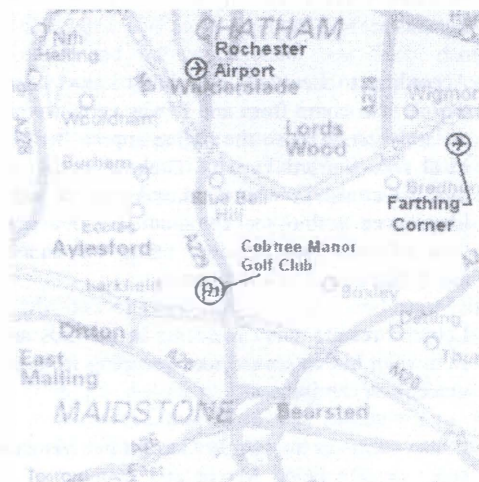
Leonard recalls many incidents in the '30s and '40s when big cats were seen escaping from the inadequate captivity.

It also seems as though Sir Garrard had his dark side, despite being Mayor and member of

various zoological societies. Being such a distinguished gentleman often disguised the fact that he inter-bred animals as well as provided poor security for his animals. And believe me, the zoo was rich in exotic animals, all reared as his own collection. Hugh William Tyrwhitt-Drake bought Cobtree Manor House, its surrounding land and several farms from the Brassey family of Preston Hill, Aylesford in 1904 after originally leasing it to them previously. Eventually, the estate was inherited by his son, Sir Garrard.

The grounds were enlarged to maintain Garrard's collection of wild animals and from the '30s to the '50s much of the estate space became a zoo.

Sir Garrard lived in Cobtree Manor with his wife and he died in 1964 aged 83. He is remembered as being an active man, owning his own circus, being known in the community and often seen riding his coach and horses. However, his deeds of generosity and his general appearance hid the fact that his mis-use of nature still causes people to speak of such acts.



Whilst there have been no bizarre reports of five-legged creatures in Medway, I have gained information from people who experienced, first hand such techniques.

In fact, Leonard Cuckow was often allowed deep into the zoo, where many visitors were not welcome. His father was a friend of Sir Garrard's, as well as being 'in' with local gamekeepers, farmers and the like. This vein continues to this day as Leonard is very friendly with local people of importance.

The thousands of yearly visitors to the zoo never heard about the frequent escapes which caused such big cat flaps and they certainly never knew about the cross-breeding of species, those unfortunate animals locked in the dingy basement beneath the zoo.

The zoo finished in 1959 due to rising costs, labour shortages and the fact that Drake was ageing. It seems that a majority of the animals were sent out to other zoos, one of these being in the Bronx, New York. However, I do not believe that all were dispersed legally. Of course, not all of today's big cat sightings can be put down to Sir Garrard's poor system as I have no doubt that people, to this day release large animals. However, the big cats of Kent now have a history to their mystery.

Drake began to build his collection of wild animals in 1900 and he had one of the largest collections in the country. His possessions began to attract townsfolk and around 1912 his shows aided local charities. By 1913 he had acquired bears, kangaroos and many birds and he moved his collection of two-hundred and fifty to Tovil.

The zoo's opening was successful but it only lasted a year due to the war. Soon after though the collection was rebuilt and after mini-tours and exhibitions a permanent zoo was set up at

the Cobtree estate. It was opened in 1934 and in two seasons it attracted over 150,000 visitors.

My Grandfather vouches for the fact that show business people were invited to the zoo as were Royalty. They all experienced the miniature train which took visitors from the entrance to the actual enclosure.

The zoo struggled through the Second World War although locals feared that bombing raids would release the hungry lions. ' And then it faded into nothing, the site now enveloped by a green golf course. The only remain being a restored elephant house.

The zoo was nothing in comparison to today's enclosures at Howletts and Port Lympne but it was something different for the families at war time.

Maybe Drake took advantage of his high profile for we must remember that his exhibition was an enjoyable distraction, so did anyone care about a strewn puma or two ?

I never knew the man but through sources it would seem that his zoo was often approached by the local authorities in regards to escaped animals. Indeed, judging from a 1939 programme we could take a pick from any number of creatures. Drake may not have logged his entire collection and also may not have missed the few that went astray.

I needed to spotlight Sir Garrard and his zoo due to the fact that I'd been fortunate enough to be in contact with people who actually saw cats escaping from his cages. Indeed, Sir Garrard may not have been aware of insufficient security and by the time something had been done it was too late.

I feel entitled to point a finger at Drake, as well as various other rich families in Kent who kept large cats in their mansions. It is even known that various rock stars around Kent and Sussex kept

large creatures but what happened to those is another story.

There is also the possibility that Sir Garrard knew animals had escaped but turned his nose up for not wanting his reputation dented. If his zoo had been examined it would no doubt have been deemed unsafe and suffered a premature collapse, thus draining him of his wealth.

For the record, Sir Garrard collected the following animals over twenty years of his zoo time: Bears, bison, baboon, camel, cheetah, chimpanzee, deer, dingo, elephants, foxes, gnu, hyena, jackal, kangaroo, leopard, lion, llama, monkey, porcupine, racoon, rats, special sheep, wild swine, wolves, yak, zebra, many birds, reptiles, horses and fish.

Indeed, here we may have the answer to Kent's crypto riddle. Did escaped creatures from sixty years ago spawn the cycle in effect today? Whilst a majority of the animals, as far as we know, were kept in captivity successfully, there must have been escapee's.

This has to be fact, otherwise an eighty-year old gentleman would not bring it up. Indeed, the big cat sightings of the '90s are triggering memories of past occurrences. In many cases, from years ago, people often do not think about what they've seen, until years later when a similar incident causes them to.

I often ask myself though, how come other out-of-place animals are not seen in the area? If a variety of species did escape from Drake's Zoo then I can only assume that they died shortly afterwards. I've no hard reports of sightings involving any of the listed zoo creatures, except for the big cats.

Judging by what Leonard Cuckow saw in his teenage years, I would have to say that a handful of escapes would be sufficient enough to spawn today's local flap of feline sightings. However, I do believe that some of the big cats have come from other sources, such as private collections. I certainly do not believe that the Kent cats are the same cats that roamed the areas of Surrey, Sussex and Essex. Maybe one may have prowled this far but I immediately dismiss the possibility. The fact is, the Kent cats have only hit the headlines in the latter part of the '90s. This fact must surely dismiss the possibility that cats from neighbouring counties, in the '70s and '80s have reached Kent. I have no doubt in my mind that the recent spate of sightings are, in some way caused to the intervention of the 1976 Dangerous Wild Animals Act.

The strange thing is, if so many cats escaped from Drake's Zoo, why weren't they seen in the '50s, the '60s, the '70s and the '80s like they are now? Well, I do have sightings which stretch back to those years, but they were not frequent, or at least they were not reported. Of course, this immediately alters the situation. At the moment the local newspapers are covering the cat situation very often, yet in the past the media may have only featured a cat sighting once a year. Straight away this changes the phenomenon.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cuckow does not recall the newspapers in the past featuring such tales. And, Leonard never reported his cat sightings until now, due to the fact that the local paper was actually covering the flap.

I am aware of a number of livestock kills in Kent that point to big cats. Mr. Cuckow pointed me to Islingham farm, a small holding with a pond, a few miles away from his home. The farm is near Wainscott, an area not far from other big

cat sightings and flap areas such as Cooling, covered in other articles.

Apparently one of the farmers at Islingham Farm had lost a few lambs and dismissed the idea of foxes.

He openly spoke to Leonard about the kills but when I contacted the farm I was basically snubbed by the farmer. He simply told me that he had had lambs killed but it was done by a fox, he also believed that the cat-flap was due to drunken witnesses.

If bizarre hallucinations causes people to see large felines in Kent, then the woman in the following case must have taken the largest tab of acid known to man:

Marilyn Dorrell had the sighting of her life towards the end of April when she apparently saw two big cats and a domestic cat, all in the same vicinity and only yards apart. Of course, upon hearing about the incident I began to question the reliability of detail but Marilyn was positive of what she saw. She said: "Some people asked me if it was a fox but it definitely wasn't - it was a puma."

I hear you ask me, "What is so bizarre about a routine big cat sighting?" ; here is my answer.

All of the sightings of Kent big cats have occurred in rural areas such as fields, woodland and undergrowth, even big cats seen near buildings have emerged from woodland. However, Marilyn Dorrell spotted the mystery cats in the local High Street, albeit at night.

Marilyn was on her way to a show at Chatham's Central Theatre, a building that lies on a busy, shop-filled street. There is no woodland near-by; this makes the event even more extraordinary.

She was with members of her family on the April evening and upon nearing the theatre car-park (situated at the back of the building) she noticed a crowd of people looking up at a domestic cat which seemed to be stranded on a roof of a building. The bizarre thing about this was the fact that a lynx was present too.

Marilyn, and the crowd watched for some time before going on to the show. However, after the programme Marilyn decided to go back to the area. Upon arriving she saw the domestic cat again, as well as the lynx. Even more strange was the even larger cat she spotted walking on a higher ledge. It was a Puma!

She said: *"It started walking up and down the ledge looking down at the other two cats on the roof - I was just amazed by it"*.

Marilyn then staged an early morning vigil in the car park to see if the puma was going to go any further and although she saw it again it never ventured to the ground. Even more bizarre is the fact that the next day the fire brigade were called out to rescue the domestic cat, and when they got to the spot they were surprised to see a lynx spring out and bound off, but there was no sign of a puma!

The sceptical perception of such an incident would obviously question the witnesses accuracy in identifying an animal. Even I first thought about the possibility of misidentification but the witness managed to pin-point the various species of feline from puma to lynx to domestic cat. If there was to be any element of exaggeration then surely Marilyn would have 'seen' three big cats.

At least one big cat was seen, this can be backed up by the firemen who disturbed the creature. Of course, this particular event is quite bizarre and quite extraordinary as it is a very different big cat sighting. However, although the flap is quite

rich at the moment, I do not see any need for Marilyn to have fabricated the story. There may be a few holes in the tale, but there are also points which harden its truth.

I do not know if the crowd of people actually saw any big cats but they obviously saw the domestic feline. It would seem strange if Marilyn was the only person to see the bigger cats because surely the people never moved on once Marilyn had joined them find it strange that Marilyn seems to be the only witness and even the newspaper report stated that Marilyn 'seemed' to be the only witness.

I never jump to conclusions in assuming that all big cat sightings are genuine, this can also be said for experiences with UFOs, other beasts and ghosts. However, all cases must be looked into and analysed and with Marilyn's incident I must simply look at what is there. Indeed, she is positive of what she saw and if we come to doubt her then we must say that the firemen never saw a lynx.

A Puma, being three times the size of a lynx, may well have pursued the smaller big cat. In turn, the lynx may well have been tracking the domestic cat. These theories offer a number of confusing Possibilities. For one, if the lynx was on the same ledge as the domestic cat, why didn't it attack it at all ? In fact, they seemed to keep each other company for more than a day without any friction: Also, if the puma was hungry, why didn't it venture further ? Of course, it may not have been able to find a way down but it seems awfully peculiar to hear of such company.

There did not seem to be any vicious commotion between the felines and this brings me to question Marilyn's descriptions. Is there a Possibility that she did see a puma, as well as two cubs ?

If this is the case, maybe the roof of the building was their unusual habitat. However, the more I think about the event, the more confused I become. Of course, there is the Possibility that Marilyn did see one big cat but maybe she'd read about the cats in the paper and decided to exaggerate the incident for the gain of five minutes of fame. This seems unlikely too, although it is bizarre as to why no puma emerged when the firemen moved in to rescue the domestic 'moggy'.

There is no woodland directly near Chatham's busy High Street. The big cats must have been released in the vicinity by someone or they travelled from woodland by night. However, would a domestic cat attract them to such a concrete jungle ? Indeed, cats can be curious creatures and big cats have been known to travel along the town rail-road lines in order to venture into more busy areas. However, no other sightings emerged from this period and so it remains one of the most mysterious big cat sightings that I've ever heard about.

It seems impossible that all the big cats were stranded on the building of the roof. If this is the case, we must still ask why a lynx ? Why a puma?

Since this incident the Beast Of Bluebell Hill....

EDITOR'S NOTE: See Neil's article in the 1999 Yearbook

.....and other local big cats have quietened down. The sightings are still occurring but I guess there is always the fear that some stories are either exaggeration or complete fiction. There are many reasons as to why people 'make up' experiences, but the case I have just mentioned almost seems too strange to be unreal.

I say this because, let's face it, if you are going to make up a story regarding a big cat sighting, surely you would go for something a little more believable. The fact is, some kind of cat was seen on a roof-top in Chatham High Street, however, I do believe the 'cats' were of one species.

I certainly believe that a domestic cat was present and certainly a lynx-type feline, but I also believe that maybe the 'puma' was a lynx too. I would have suggested that the 'puma' and lynx were one, but Marilyn claims to have seen three separate felines.

I am quite baffled by the case. Unfortunately, apart from the newspaper report, much detail on the incident has faded into obscurity.

This may be due to the fact that the local authorities do not want to alarm local 'shoppers' who would obviously be put off by the existence of a big cat, or cats.

The 'puma' creature was not seen again as in the case of the lynx and the domestic cat.

If the 'puma' had scampered off in the day, it would most definitely have been spotted, for the area which surrounds the 'sighting place' consists of car-parks, extremely busy town roads, shops and many housing estates. The nearest woodland would only provide temporary cover, for it is only of small size.

So, some sixty years ago, a handful of big cats escaped from a local zoo, and in some cases have spawned a phenomenon. I'm pretty sure that many big cat sightings of today have stemmed from zoo escapes that may well have occurred over fifty years ago.

If the cats were in abundance then, and able to breed then the population of today seems quite unsurprising. However, in some cases it would appear that such felines have caused almost a degree of supernatural confusion in their ways.

Although there are many zoos littered throughout Britain, not all stock a variety of big cat. More recently Kent has become more populated by zoos inhabited by big cats, however, any escapes that have occurred have been dealt with.

Big cats sightings date back to the 1700's, but the 1900's has most certainly brought the mystery to even more prominence.

However, I don't think anyone or anything can explain as to why such creatures should mysteriously vanish as well as appear in extraordinary places.

NORTH OF THE BORDER

by Tom Anderson

Illegal eagle

It is notoriously difficult to breed golden eagles in captivity. Recent claims from Moscow Zoo that their captive breeding programme is a spectacular success were therefore met with some scepticism.

As yet there is no evidence that Scottish eggs or chicks have been smuggled into Russia but assuming someone is telling porkys, (or is it Gorkys?) they must be coming from somewhere illegally.

Once a species is represented in a collection it is easy to produce paperwork proving it to be captive bred. Should this nefarious trade be Russian-run, we need look no further than the current boom in organised crime thereabouts. Around twenty billion roubles worth of illicit goods enter Moscow annually and some of it, it

has to be said, with official sanction. A favourite method is the use of large wicker baskets, purportedly full of vegetables etc, but ideal for secreted wildlife due to the ventilation advantages of basketry. This is known as *Maŭia Raŭŭia*.



The ingenuity of animal smugglers surpasses even that of drug couriers. During the Tour de France of '89 a PR man for a tyre company was suspected of border crossing with rare snakes inside his Michelin man costume. Customers at Ecuador's Quito immigration noted a disproportionate number of hunchbacks in transit and found people were carrying tortoises in shoulder harnesses of ex Argentinean army webbing from the Galapagos islands, an national reserve, it's ecology threatened by rats and goats.

You are probably familiar, gentle reader, with the quaint Spanish custom of hurling latter omnivore from church bell towers. This is not, as you may have thought, to test its suspension system, but originated in Navarre, famous for the bull running of Pamplona. The story goes is that a local cleric, confronted by his bishop for stealing holy relics, inserted a necklace into an unfortunate kid and tossed it to the starving peasants below, proclaiming his affinity with the common people. This is one of the few instances where the animal was the vessel of the contraband, rather than vice versa.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Editor and his band of merry men
welcome an exchange of
correspondence on any subject of
interest to readers of this magazine.*

*We reserve the right to edit letters
and would like to stress that opinions
voiced are those of the individual
correspondent rather than being
necessarily those of the editorial team
or the Centre for Fortean Zoology.*

*Every attempt is made not to infringe
anyone's moral rights or copyright,
and we apologise if we have
unwittingly done so.*

WOLVERINE WEIRDNESS

Hi Jon,

Just a quick note re Animals & Men #18.

Enjoyed the Wolverine story. It reminded me of a time when I was in about 6th grade (around 11 years of age) when we had a "wolverine scare". Supposedly wolverines had come to town and were being vicious. We were warned to stay away from woods and fields, and to go straight home from school. It had us pretty scared. Being 11, I believed it all, so did no other research, so do not know if a wolverine was actually spotted or not.

As for the lamprey.....was it possible that a lamprey from another area could have survived in this stream? I ask because my sister and I

came upon two lampreys at a beach near our cabin.

They were not indigenous to the area, but are great bait, although illegal as far as I know to use. From their location we surmised that they had been used for bait, then dumped by some asshole. They were about 7 inches long unstretched, and quite a bit longer when fully extended. We tried pulling them off of the rocks to destroy them, and wound up smashing them there.

I am not an advocate of killing things as you well know, but the thought of the lamprey's getting a toe-hold in that swimming lake was not very attractive. My question then is..... do you think it could have been an introduced species?

- Felinda Bullock, Wisconsin

JON REPLIES: the most interesting thing about 'my' lamprey is that (although I didn't know this when I caught the creature or when I wrote the article in the last issue) there are at present no known species of warm water lampreys in the world. This creature is therefore something particularly special.

As to whether or not it could have been an introduced specimen: as always, one has to ask the question 'why'. The only introduced fish that I have managed to find from Puerto Rico is the Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia affinis*) which was introduced (as the name implies) to control mosquitoes.

More details will be released on the Puerto Rican lamprey in due course...

Pelorus Jack

Dear Jon:

Concerning your enquiry in the last issue of A&M about the dolphin 'Pelorus Jack', the following is from Rudyard Kipling's "Something of Myself"

about his visit to New Zealand in October 1891:

"...at Wellington I was met, precisely where warned to expect him, by 'Pelorus Jack', the big, white-marked dolphin, who held it his duty to escort shipping up the harbour. He enjoyed a special protection of the Legislature proclaiming him sacred, but, years later, some animal shot and wounded him and he was seen no more".

The editor of the book adds that the dolphin's territory was not Wellington but French Pass, across the Cook Strait from Wellington.

A query for Richard Freeman:

I found an account in a history of the Knights of St John of how a future master of the order killed a 'dragon' on the island of Rhodes in the fourteenth century. The creature did not breathe fire, fly or otherwise behave flamboyantly; were there still crocodiles in Egypt at that time, and could one have got across to Rhodes? If he is intending to hunt 25 ft monitors, would he be interested in the knight's technique?

- Chris Clark

Walton on the Hill (Tadworth), Surrey

RICHARD REPLIES: Certainly there were crocodiles in N. Egypt at that time. They were probably still found as far north as Turkey in the 14th century. However, the Nile crocodile *C. niloticus* dislikes salt water and would have to have been taken to Rhodes by boat.

Both the Nile crocodile and the Nile monitor (another contender for the Rhodes dragon) are still found in Egypt south of the Aswan Dam.

And yes, Chris any dragon hunting tips from days of yore (especially those involving virgins) will be gratefully appreciated.....

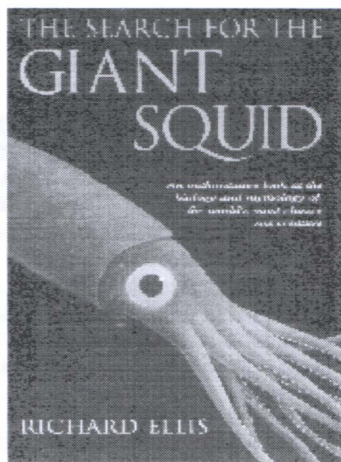
BOOK REVIEWS

Richard "I say what I think" Freeman,
Zoologist and *Animals & Men* editor,
finds out what's afoot in the world of
fortean-related books.

The search for the Giant Squid

Richard Ellis. Hale *****

Mr Ellis is an eminently readable author who previously distracted us with the excellent *Monsters of the Sea*. In his new tome Richard turns to a cryptid who made the leap into reality, *Architeuthis dux* - the giant squid. This is the book on giant squid being by far the most detailed and authoritative work on the animal to date.



The book traces the squid through ancient legends of the old Norse Kraken to early

naturalists like Erik Pontoppidan who grasped for the truth to his 19th century counterparts who unmasked the monster. He looks at how we have portrayed it in literature and on screen and details the (so far fruitless) expeditions to film this colossus alive. The most fascinating part of the book is the chapters on human encounters with the Kraken. Many of the tales of giant squid attacking and sinking ships seem to be apocryphal but the myths are enhanced with biological riddles. Far more enthralling: what do they feed on? What is their breeding cycle? How big do they grow - 60, 80, or 100 feet?

The complete list of strandings from 1545 to the present day makes compelling reading as does the list of all the full sized models of the giant squid displayed around the world (including one at the historically named town of Dildo in Newfoundland).

No one has ever seen *Architeuthis* alive and well in its true habitat. Even this book with its wealth of information cannot capture the essence of this living legend. As Ellis puts it himself....

"We know we are supposed to believe in it, but still we doubt. Can there really be a 60 foot long creature with unblinking dinner plate eyes in the unknown vastness of the icy depths? The existence of Architeuthis only confirms our fears and inadequacies: despite our puny efforts to find it the monster perdures....We need to find the giant squid, but we also need not to find it."

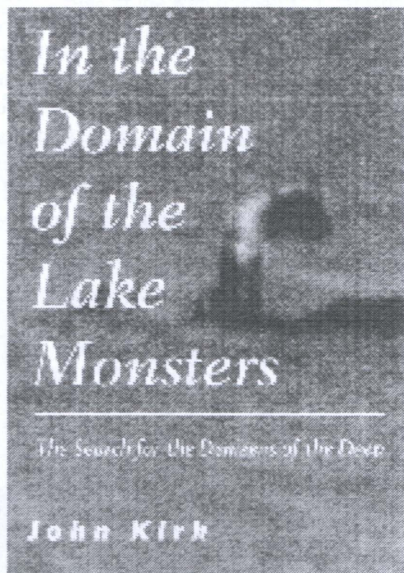
Miss this book at your peril. - RF

In the Domain of the Lake Monsters

John Kirk Key Porter \$24.95 *****

Unfortunately this book is currently only available in America. Hopefully it will be

released in Britain, as it is a fantastic read. The book is broken into several sections. The first and perhaps the most interesting charts John's own involvement with Ogopogo, the monster of



Lake Okanagan. It tells of his move to Canada and his discovery of the lake's strange inhabitants. Mr Kirk has been lucky enough to have seen Ogopogo on several occasions, some of them quite close. Far from being a lay man John was once producer and master of ceremonies at Ocean Park, Hong Kong, which makes his testimony compelling. This part of the book put me in mind of the very personal writings of the greatly missed Tim Dinsdale, the original lake monster hunter. This is a touch that has been missing in many recent books on the subject in their rush to be ultra-scientific.

The next part looks beyond to lake monsters world wide dealing with them continent by continent. These include some very obscure cases from lakes of which I have never heard. It

is these ill-known lakes that are the most compelling read due to the new data Kirk has uncovered.

Finally there's a comparison between Ogopogo and Nessie, looking at morphology and behaviour. This seems to indicate the two are different species.

The book is slightly marred by lack of illustrations, references and an index but these are minor gripes. Overall the book makes an excellent addition to any cryptozoologist's collection. - RF

Fortean Studies Volume 5

Steve Moore (editor)

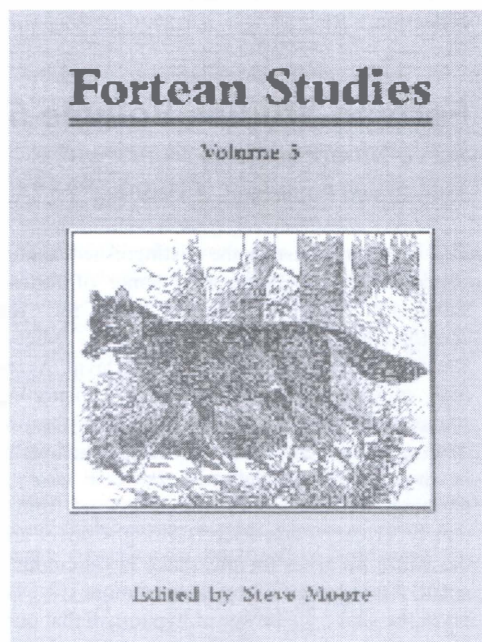
John Brown Publishing £19.99 *****

The latest and best in the distinguished annual collection of papers on all manner of fortian subjects. There is much here for the cryptozoologist. Gary Mangiacopra, Michel Raynal, Dr Dwite Smith and Dr David Avery look at early evidence for giant constricting snakes in South America. Unfortunately the two cases they concentrate on the most, I believe to be hoaxes. The celebrated Fawcett case is narrated by the Colonel like an extract from a poorly written Edgar Rice Burroughs novel and the width he gives for the snake is ridiculously small. Algot Lange's story is even more silly. He gives the snake the power of hypnotism that only he (being a white man) can resist. The skin of the 52 foot snake that he supposedly took back to New York never materialised. I wonder why?

This said, I actually believe in the existence of the *sucuruju gigante* - and Gary's writing is always a joy to read. Pity he picked two dull cases.

(continued)

Our old mate Karl Shuker provides an insightful supplement to Bernard Heuvelman's checklist of cryptozoological animals. This spectacular tour of the menagerie of the dammed ranges from giant pangolins in Indonesia to marsupial "apes". Some, like mainland thylacines, are more probable than others such as surviving pterosaurs, whilst others, for example - the waheela (modern descendent of the bear dogs?) are so ill-known we can but guess. One wonders which of these absentees from the ark will be discovered first.



Andy Roberts, a writer more usually associated with ultra-skeptical ufology, provides a thought provoking article on the infamous big grey men of Ben MacDhui in the Cairngorms. After much digging Andy shows us this celebrated classic of forteana is no such thing.

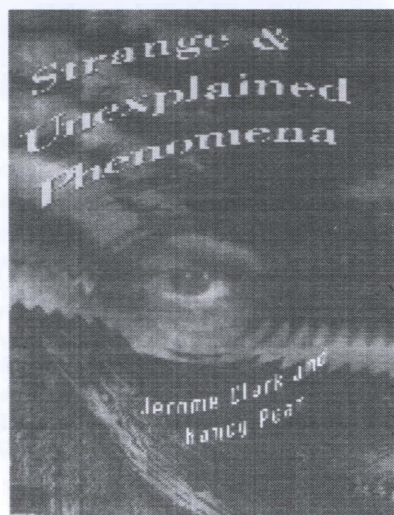
Together with your editor, yours truly's humble offering was an examination of dog/anthropoid hybrids. Looking at case histories and folklore we found werewolves and dog-headed people scattered throughout many cultures from the giant "baboons" of Africa to a dog-headed saint!

For me, the collection was slightly marred by the inclusion yet again of insufferable drivel by Michel Meurger. Quite what the fascination the F.T. posse seem to have with this no-hoper and his intelligence-insulting pap is beyond me. Let's hope he will be absent from next years' volume! - RF

Strange & Unexplained Phenomena

Jerome Clark and Nany Pear

Visible Ink



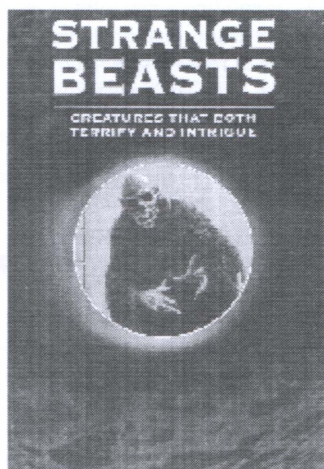
General books on forteana are two a penny and go from utter tripe to classics by Karl Shuker or Francis Hitching. This book belongs firmly to

the latter category and is a pleasure to read. Just about every crypto critter going is covered with old cases, cheek-by-jowl with brand new material. An original idea was to show how fortune has been represented on the big screen by detailing films of each subject in the margins. Though far from exhaustive this is an interesting addition. With lively illustrations smashing cartoons and biographies of leading lights in each subject this is a must read book. How can it fail? - after all, pears are the most fortune of fruits. - RF

Strange Beasts

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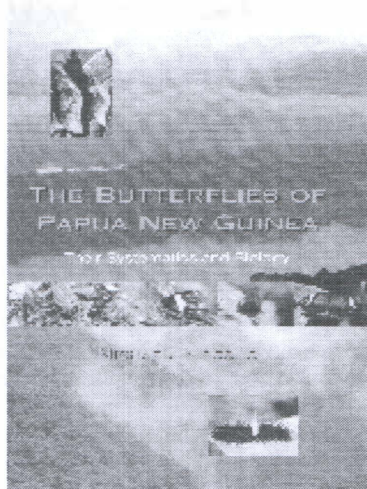
A shop checkout style book that consists mainly of reprints from the old Unexplained magazine of the late 70s. A mixed bag of subjects British big cats, Neanderthals, Minnesota ice man, vampires, mermaids, thunderbirds, Irish lake monsters, dinosaur extinction, the devil's hoof prints, dragons, surviving mammoths, toad folklore and werewolves, quite a mix! It's only 127 pages long

and won't tell you any thing you don't already know but it's a good book for children with an interest in the subject. - RF

The Butterflies of Papua New Guinea: Their systematics and biology

Michael Parsons

Academic Press



Do you like butterflies? Do you like Papua New Guinea? Then you will love "The Butterflies of Papua New Guinea"! Unfortunately it is priced at £185, which makes it way beyond the budget of the casual buyer.

This is the ultimate guide to northern antipodean lepidoptera. At nearly 1000 pages long and with over 3000 colour plates this book should be in the library of anyone interested in the subject. It not only includes an exhaustive species list but notes on the systematics, phylogeny and habitats of these exotic and beautiful insects. An essential purchase for the serious student of the subject.

Giant Ground Sloth Survival

by

Richard Freeman

Richard Freeman, zoologist, looks at giant ground sloth survival in South America, with first a short overview; he then concentrates on sightings from Venezuela.

Ground sloths were terrestrial edentates found throughout South America. They ranged in size from *Megatherium*, that was as large as an Asian elephant, down to species no larger than domestic cats. They were all herbivores, browsing foliage that they pulled down with their spectacular claws. Ground sloths were capable of bipedal movement that helped them reach high growing vegetable matter. The scythe like talons also doubled up as defensive weapons against contemporary predators like *Thylacosmilus*, a marsupial sabre toothed "cat". It is believed that the whole group became extinct about 10,000 years ago at the end of the Pleistocene epoch due to climate change and human predation. However many cryptozoologists, myself included, believe that at least one species has persisted till the present day.

A medium sized group of ground sloths were the *mylodonts*, about the size of a gorilla. These possessed a singular feature, skin that was studded with bony nodules (dermal ossicles) that effectively acted like chain mail. These seem to be the animals reported today.

In 1558 French explorer and priest, Father Andre Thevet was told of a Patagonian animal called the *su*. This was said to have a short face,

long tail, and powerful claws, all features possessed by ground sloths. The *su* also carried its young on its back as all sloths do.

Ramon Lista, Argentina's Secretary of State, saw a specimen in the 1870s, whilst exploring Santa Cruz in southern Patagonia. Lista and his companions saw a large animal they described as resembling a pangolin (a group of scaly ant/termite eating mammals from Africa and Asia) but with reddish grey hair instead of scales. The men fired on the creature several times but it escaped unscathed into the undergrowth. The failure of the bullets to harm the beast may have been due to its dermal armour. The Tehuelche Indians said this area was inhabited by an ox-sized animal with dense fur and huge claws. It was famed for its invulnerability to arrows and bullets.

In 1932 a British Museum expedition searched Central America for surviving mylodonts. Led by Dr Thomas Gann it concentrated on the Yucatan and Honduras. In a marsh close to the Rio Hondo border with British Honduras (now Belize), Gann briefly spotted a ground sloth. He describes it as trotting on all fours like a large ape. It had a sizeable body covered with black, shaggy fur and a white mane obscuring the face.

Richard Greenwell, secretary of the International Society of Cryptozoology, was told by a colleague that he had seen a ground sloth in a cave in Ecuador.



drawing by Richard Freeman

More recently Dr David C. Oren of Brazil's Goeldi Natural History Museum has been investigating reports of ground sloths in the Matto Grosso area of the Amazon. Indians speak of a creature they call *mapinguary*. The greatly feared beast has red fur, is invulnerable to arrows (except on the stomach, the only place mylodonts were not armoured), has backwards pointing feet and a second mouth in its belly from which it spews forth a noxious breath. These last two features seem odd but Oren thinks he can explain them. Ground

sloths had incurving claws that left tracks that looked as if the feet were pointing back to front. The second mouth Oren believes is a

gland that emits a foul-smelling gas as a defensive measure.

The Indians say it feeds on a diet of berries and bacaba palm hearts, leaving droppings resembling those of a horse. Oren has yet to lay eyes on the *mapinguary* but he has collected horse like droppings that are currently being analysed.

In Venezuela these creatures are known as *mono grande* or *di-di*. The natives believe them to be huge apes but this is almost certainly incorrect as

(cont'd)

there are no apes in S.America (or any fossil precedent for them). It is more likely that what is being reported are ground sloths. These animals are superficially similar to apes, with their short faces and partially bipedal stance.

Roger Courteville was a civil engineer who led an ethnographic expedition into S. America and in 1926 became the first man to cross the entire continent by car. He twice encountered ape like animals in 1938 and 1947. One of these occurred on the Colombo-Venezuelan frontier. He described it as follows..."*A prominent brow overhung its very soft grey-blue eyes. A dark hairless face rose above its receding chin. It had a tuft of thick hair on the crown of its forehead; a powerful neck towered above its broad v-shaped thorax; long reddish hair covered its limbs and body.*"

There is nothing in this description that cannot be reconciled with a ground sloth. Courteville continued..."*Its upper arms seemed longer than its forearms, just as its thighs seemed longer than its shins. The footprints left in the fine sand showed me that it walked on the outside edge of its feet, as chimpanzees do*"

Ground sloths also put their weight on the outside of their feet; this we can see from fossil tracks. Apes however put the weight on the whole foot. He approached to within a couple of meters of the animal before it bared its teeth and fled back into the jungle.

Dr Charles Barrington Brown, Government Surveyor in British Guiana heard rumours of hairy "men" living on the Upper Mazaruni on the Venezuelan frontier in 1868. He himself heard the alleged cry of the di-di, a whistle beginning in a high key and slowly dying away in a low key, repeated three times. Brown was told by the Indians....

"The di-di is said by the Indians to be a short, thick set, and powerful wild man, whose body is covered in hair and who lives in the forest. A belief in the existence of this fabulous creature is universal over the whole of British, Venezuelan, and Brazilian Guiana. On the Demera river some years after this, i met a half-breed woodcutter, who related an encounter that he had with two di-di,- a male and a female-in which he successfully resisted their attacks with his axe. In the fray, he stated he was a good deal scratched"

Taking along some reconstructions of ground sloths and showing them to local natives would be a good idea. Does a future expedition for the CFZ beckon?

Another mystery worth enquiring about is the "monkey-eating tree". This was reported in a 1974 book *Carnivorous Plants* by Randall Shwartz. He refers to a recent report by Brazilian explorer Mariano da Silva. Da Silva had been searching for a settlement of Yatapu Indians on the Brazilian border with Guyana (close to southern Venezuela) when he encountered a flesh eating tree. This strange plant released a very distinctive smell that was highly attractive to monkeys enticing them to climb its trunk.

Then the tree's leaves totally envelope the unfortunate simians rendering them inaudible and invisible whilst being digested. Several days later the leaves unfold and the monkey's bones drop to the ground stripped of flesh.

If there is any truth in this story, these plants may occur further north in Venezuela itself. Once again the "lost world" may prove a sanctuary for such vegetable predators.

ANIMALS & MEN

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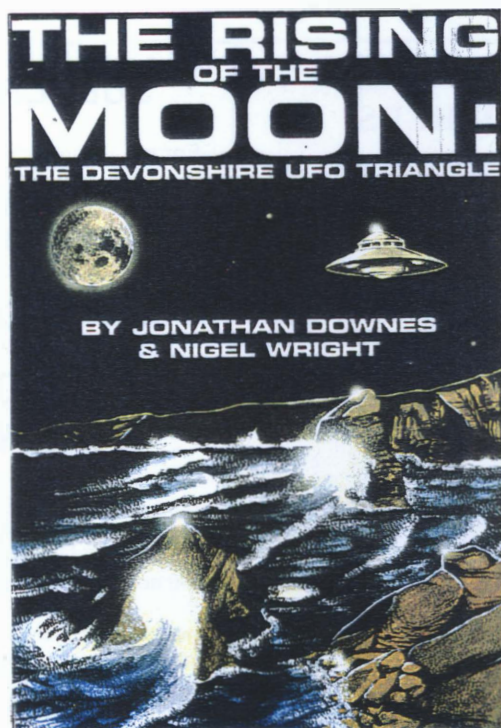
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